

As African Americans migrated north in the early twentieth century and immigration restrictions limited the number of foreign-born servants, African Americans became more common in northern households. Clark-Lewis's series of interviews with black domestics in Washington, D.C. reveals that these women were well-aware of their limited job opportunities. Nettie Bass recalled the employment situation for white and black women before World War I:

Where brother and his second wife took me there was nothing but colored people. Some people had whites in other places, but they'd be old to do better. Young ones? They'd only stay 'til a better job would come along – a store, factory, or office – somewhere would take them. Plus them people had to pay whites more. A butler made the best money. And a white maid – my God they made ten times or more what we did. But we [African Americans] knew we'd always do housework, and had to take any little bit we got. If not, what? They [employers] know'd you was never getting store, factory, or government work. You was there for life.⁹⁰

African-American women working as domestics in the North typically “lived out” in their own homes rather than with their employers, reflecting the traditions of southern slavery in which they were housed in separate quarters.

In the North or the South, African-American servants were depicted using a specific visual language that appropriated the culture of the “old South.” Fine artists and popular illustrators typically employed the stereotypes of “Uncle,” “Mammy” or “Dinah” in their depiction of African-American servants. Uncle had a fringe of white hair. Mammy's physical and personality traits included being overweight, sexless, and wearing a kerchief on her head; although stubborn and independent, she was kind, loyal, and devoted to the white children that were her responsibility.⁹¹ Dinah inhabited the kitchen and was often portrayed as more bold and domineering. While white servants were visually identified by the black dress, white apron and cap, black female servants were

depicted wearing aprons and headwraps. The headwrap in particular became of signifier of Dinah or Mammy. This article of clothing was thus transformed from a symbol of African origins and pride into a mark of servility.⁹² These stereotypical images reflect a different “ideal,” the slaves of the antebellum era when servants were loyal and willing to serve.

African-American servants appear with some frequency in nineteenth and early twentieth century painting. Black servants in paintings generally inhabit the same parts of the scene as their white counterparts: corners, doorways, and distant picture planes.⁹³ However, when painters featured black servants in the foreground, they often treated them quite tenderly. Francis Edmonds’ *Devotion* (1857) [Figure B-32] shows an older African American cook feeding her master. Painted in the shadow of the coming war, Edmonds fixed the scene in the eighteenth century through the clothing and furniture in the scene.⁹⁴ Although placing the image in the past may have kept the painting from being politicized, it still speaks strongly about the romantic aspects of the antebellum period and suggests nostalgia for the past. Thomas Waterman Wood’s *The Faithful Nurse* (1893) [Figure B-33] features the a dignified black nurse holding her charge, but the Mammy stereotype is depicted through her dress and the deference to the white child, who dominates the painting by being the most illuminated.⁹⁵

At least one artist painted a scene of black servants and their employers with more sympathy for the hardship of the former. Winslow Homer’s *A Visit from the Old Mistress* (1876) [Figure B-34] depicts an uncomfortable scene. While the African-American women are still plump, aproned, and turbaned in the style of Mammy, these women assert the self-confidence and dignity they were denied as servants. One woman

holds her own child instead of the white child of her employers and another remains seated in the presence of the former mistress, a statement of defiance.⁹⁶

African Americans appear infrequently in women's magazine advertisements, and when they do, they are servants or spokespeople for household brands (such as Rastus the Cream of Wheat chef or Aunt Jemima). These images utilize the same stereotypes established in fine art both in the servants' physical appearance and servile demeanor. The advertising copy usually invokes nostalgia for the antebellum era and its perceived romance. Aunt Jemima is the best-known advertising icon to utilize the mammy stereotype in its appeals. She debuted as the spokeswoman for a specific brand of pancake mix in 1893 at Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition where Nancy Green portrayed the character in a booth shaped like a giant flour barrel. The Aunt Jemima campaign was particularly successful in the 1920s, due in part to the work of the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency, but also because she personified the ideal servant at a time when immigration restrictions increased the severity of the servant problem. Aunt Jemima also blurs real and ideal because advertising and promotions like that of the 1893 World's Fair were ambiguous about the true existence of the character. Aunt Jemima print advertisements featured a myth of the product's origin: "Years ago these same cakes were famous up and down the Mississippi River. The news of Aunt Jemima's tender cakes with their wonderful flavor was carried from plantation to plantation. But in those days only her master and guests could have them. While her master lived, Aunt Jemima closely guarded her recipe."⁹⁷ House ads for the J. Walter Thompson Company illustrate the construction of the myth and examples of the brand's

iconic packaging [Figure B-35]. Aunt Jemima's popularity led to related promotions such as dolls and cookie jars, which further ingrained the image of the southern Mammy.

A 1929 advertisement for A.1. Sauce [Figure B-36] builds on Aunt Jemima as a visual precedent and juxtaposes the African-American servant with her white employers. The ad clearly identifies A.1. with the South in its copy (although the label distinguishes it as a product of Great Britain): "In the South . . . there you find shades of flavor that are envied by housewives the country over. There you find uncounted things to eat that old Southern mammies cook in magic pots and pans." Two white women and a man sit around the dinner table smiling and enjoying their meal. Behind them stands an African-American woman wearing a headwrap with a tray of what appear to be biscuits. She looks out to the viewer with a grin. She seems as unaware of the people she is serving as they are of her. An advertisement for Gold Medal Flour features a similar jovial servant in a headwrap, which also references the South in its copy [Figure B-37].

Idealized black servants harkening back to the antebellum era are also present in literary examples that depict their behavior. These servants not only do their work well, but profess their love for their masters and mistresses. One interesting example is a dialect novel written by Sallie May Dooley, the mistress of the Maymont estate in Richmond, Virginia, entitled *Dem Good Ole Times* (1906). The novel's structure is centered on tales told by a former slave to his grandson about the good times before the war. The Dooleys had grown up in the antebellum era and clearly were comfortable with the arrangement of slavery, based on the way Mrs. Dooley speaks about this institution through the voice of her narrator. She portrays slaves as being well-cared for, respected by and respectful of their owners, and in possession of plenty of free time for leisure.

The grandfather starts by explaining that ““Evvy fambly had a nice cabin to deysef, wid a yard fur chickens, un a little garden fur vegables. We had plenty to eat, a plenty to war, un mighty little wuck to do, caze dar waz so many to do it.””⁹⁸ After describing his courtship and marriage, he tells of his mistress allowing the couple to get married in the family parlor: ““Miss say we could be married in her parlor, un she would git her own preacher – she were Pistocal, effin we choos’n. Dat jes suit Ginny, caze she always love white folk’s ways, un she say, dey marrige was a mo serisome un everlastin bizness dem de cullered people’s. Dat were a fac in dem times.””⁹⁹ After Ben saves the master’s child from a poisonous snake, the master is so thankful that he offers to free Ben and his wife and give them some money to get started on. Ben is confused by the offer and believes it is a sign of his master’s displeasure:

‘Marster, what is we done, dat you should cas us off dis a way? Now I know fur sho, dat de ole sarpunt is de devil – he mos kill me, but doe let im tun us out n de gard’n uv Edom, un stoy us altogether. Dis is our home – we cyar live nowhar else. We wants to wuck fur you, long is we live, un please Gerd, arter we die, we hopes to be wid you in Heben.’¹⁰⁰

Interleaved color plates illustrate the story’s action, most of which juxtapose the lavishly dressed owner family members with the slaves. In an illustration showing the slaves greeting their master as he brings his new bride home [Figure B-38], two rows of slaves flank the couple, who stand at the top of the stairs dressed in their finery. A typical “Mammy” character wearing an apron and head wrap and grasps the mistress’s hand with an expression of love. The responses of the master and mistress are ambivalent at best.

Dooley’s book and its illustrations reflect the impact of the servant problem in the South. This family’s parents had grown up with the institution of slavery and even nearly

fifty years after the end of the Civil War, their nostalgia for the “good old days” persisted. However, the romance of the antebellum South meant that the Mammy stereotype has had a particularly long life well into the twentieth century.

Actual Servants Depicted by Others and Themselves

Unfortunately, current knowledge of domestic service is skewed by the dominance of written sources from the employers’ perspectives and the abundant images of ideal domestics in fine and popular art. When one turns to the rare images and writings of actual servants, new issues and stories come to light. These scarce sources provide valuable insight into the lives of servants that both counter and augment the idealized depictions.

Photographs are particularly valuable resources for discussing domestic servants since they make visible parts of the household that were invisible on a normal basis. However, such images are often shaped by the ideal. Posed photographs of household staffs document the presence of servants in a home thereby elevating a family’s status. In two examples, the servants hold objects that presumably symbolize their roles within the household. A photograph taken by Charles Van Shaick of Norwegian laundresses, cooks, parlor maids, and scullery girls in Black River Falls, Wisconsin, circa 1890 includes seven women, some in aprons, posed with household items [Figure B-39]. The children’s nurse holds a child, the scullery maid peels a vegetable over a bowl, the parlor maid carries a broom and dustpan, and so on. The photo has not been linked to a particular family. Such a large and specialized staff working for one family would be an important symbol of status, which might inspire an employer to this kind of documentation. However, pride apparently did not require that the photograph be taken in the employer’s

home. Careful study of the image reveals that the group of women is posed in front of a backdrop depicting a parlor. The edges of the “set” are visible, so presumably Van Schaick took the photo in his studio. The documentary nature of this image is overwhelmed by the anonymity of the subjects and their setting. The women’s names have not been recorded (they are identified only as “Norwegian”) and their employer is not identified. They essentially become generic representations of Norwegian servants, or the specialties revealed by their props. The generalized nature of the photo has affected its modern use as a general image of domestic servants. It has appeared regularly in scholarship on servants, but without specific discussion of the image itself. In fact, the edges are occasionally cropped to eliminate the ambiguity of the setting.¹⁰¹

Even photographs of servants that can be linked to specific families are shrouded by varying levels of vagueness, making the servants more like objects than people. The servants of Caroline Sinclair, who would become the first owner of the estate later named Brucemore in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, were photographed circa 1880 [Figure B-40]. The occasion for the photo is unknown, but remained in the possession of relatives of Eliza Brown, a servant in the group. It appears to be a posed photograph, although its graininess suggests a lack of the professional touch exhibited by Van Schaick’s photograph of the same era. Again, some of the servants hold items that may indicate their jobs within the staff.

A fascinating series of photographs from the 1916 Shakespeare Ball at Stan Hywet Hall in Akron, Ohio depict the servant staff dressed for the event in Elizabethan costume [Figures B-41 and B-42]. One of the photos is staged in the dining room where two female and two male servants hold trays with serving pieces, another is a grouping of

just the female domestics. These photos offer a unique and intriguing spin on the ideal of servant as ornament, even to the point of using them as theatrical props.

A photograph of James J. Hill's household staff at his mansion in St. Paul also documents specific employees circa 1908 [Figure B-43]. This posed photograph exhibits a carefully positioned group of figures. The only male servant is seated front and center, flanked by two female servants wearing white. A pair of liveried parlor maids stand behind him, creating a triangular arrangement. Parlor maids were the only servants in the Hill house that were required to wear uniforms. Their grooming is in line with the advice of etiquette books that men should be clean-shaven and that "the hair of a parlor maid or waitress should be the pink of neatness."¹⁰²

In all of these group photographs, certain idealized characteristics noted in fine and popular images are retained. These servants wear clean, pressed clothing. They are not disheveled from the hard work they undoubtedly endured. They are well-groomed; the women have neatly coiffed hair and the one man is clean-shaven. They are posed, and although in two examples their positions are alluded to by the presence of household items, they are not shown actively at work. In most cases, they have also lost their identity due to poor documentation or very generalized identification ("the cook," "the maid," etc.). These images also reflect the enviable position of being able to afford to hire multiple servants.

Occasionally, photographs show servants either actively working or captured in their working environment. While most of these photographs are still posed, many are more informal shots. Dining room scenes, chauffeurs with automobiles, and nurses and their charges are among the most common work-related scenes. The dining room

photographs documented a family's status by using multiple symbols of a family's social status. For example, the photo of a beautifully set table attended by two servants preparing for the annual banquet at Richmond, Virginia's Westmoreland Club [Figure B-44]. While not set in a private home, it shares an interest in the display of fine china, crystal, silver, and servants that is represented in the Stan Hywet image of the Shakespeare Ball. A photograph of a table set for Thanksgiving dinner with two African American maids presiding illustrates a more modest dining room scene that suggests the family's abundance by posing one maid with a turkey and the presence of a very large cornucopia centerpiece [Figure B-45]. The servants do not wear the traditional black and white livery (although one wears a similar uniform with a patterned dress), but like many images of white maids of this era, their hair is swept up in Gibson Girl fashion.

Brucemore's archives include several photographs of chauffeurs and automobiles, which represent another illustration of wealth in the presence of a male servant placed in charge of luxury cars. One photograph of chauffeur Bert Batten poses him between what are presumably two of the family cars [Figure B-46]. Another more curious and obviously posed photo further puts the chauffeur in his place. A photo of a European vacation taken by the Douglasses and friends in the 1920s includes Bert Batten sitting behind the group, seated in the car [Figure B-47].

Of all servants, governesses and children's nurses seem to be the most frequently photographed due to their closeness to the children. These staff members, regardless of race or ethnicity, are also typically the most fondly remembered and had more intimate relationships with their employers than other servants experienced. Some images of African American nurses reflect the "Mammy" stereotype, such as one from Henrico

County, Virginia, in the late nineteenth century [Figure B-48], but others have more in common with ideal white maids in the North. A 1907 photograph of a mulatto woman known to her employers as “Nurse” holds up a child in a long lacy gown [Figure B-49]. While Nurse normally work black and white livery, for this photograph she wears a patterned dress with a lace collar and cap—the apron is still part of her attire as if to remind the viewer of her position.¹⁰³ The crispness of her clothing, light skin, and upswept hair are closer in style to the ideal white servant depicted in *Ladies’ Home Journal* than the physical stereotype of the southern Mammy in Aunt Jemima advertisements. The clothing, hairstyle, and pose are similar to those present in a photograph of Robert Reynolds with his nurse (c.1900) from the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society [Figure B-50].

Several photos of the grounds staff at Brucemore, taken by the wife of the head gardener, are rare images of the working side of an estate depicted by employees rather than their supervisors. Archie White worked for the Douglas family between 1921 and 1937. During this time, his wife Jeannie took pictures of Archie and members of his staff at work and of their children Agnes and Edward at play on the grounds. Although she took some pictures of the mansion, most photos illustrate activities taking place in and around the “servants’ village” where the Whites lived. A posed, yet informal photograph of Archie and another gardener in the greenhouse door documents his work in that space [Figure B-51]. Archie wears overalls, as he does in many other photographs in which he is actively working. Candid photographs of grounds work, including mowing, and cleaning the pond captured a side of the Brucemore estate that the Douglasses did not

document [Figure B-52]. These photographs were made possible by the inexpensive cameras that were widely available to working class people in the early twentieth century.

The depiction of servants both in and out of uniform complicates the interpretation of livery as an essential part of domestic service. While uniforms were important indicators of difference and status in fine and popular images, they are not always present in the few images of actual servants that have survived. At Bruce more, only one member of the household staff besides Ella McDannel was photographed in uniform. A picture of Henretta Abadie, a maid for the Douglasses in 1907, wearing more typical servant livery also survives [Figure B-53]. The Douglas scrapbooks include many photographs of Ella McDannel both in and out of uniform. A double portrait of McDannel holding an infant Barbara Douglas shows her wearing a uniform [Figure B-54], although it is that of a trained nurse rather than typical black and white livery. A photograph taken on the beach in Santa Barbara [Figure B-55] is typical of most images of McDannel with the Douglas children in that she does not wear a recognizable uniform. Images of servants out of uniform call into question whether livery was as ubiquitous as fine art and popular images suggests it to have been. The servant in uniform may also have been primarily a signifier of the "ideal" servant that was most significant in the context of images that were to be seen by others. In the case of candid snapshots, such as that of Ella McDannel with the Douglas children on the beach, the private audience of the Douglas family did not require reminders of the status their nanny indicated. These photos of servants out of livery also serve as reminders that servants were people who had at least a limited life outside of their work.

While images of actual servants provide more trustworthy documentation of the history of domestic work, clearly they may also be manipulated to reflect the ideal. They are problematic especially when they were not taken by servants themselves but photographers who posed them in visually attractive compositions. Although few servants left behind written evidence, that which does survive presents yet another means by which historians can try to understand their work and daily lives. These sources include magazine articles and books written from the servant's point of view, and their diaries and scrapbooks. The published accounts of life "below stairs" are complicated to say the least, since they are most likely to be modified by editors or completely ghost-written. While diaries and personal letters are more immediate and trustworthy primary sources, they are a rare treasure.

In some cases, middle-class women posed as servants and wrote about their experiences to expose the poor working conditions that existed in many American homes. Two of the best-known examples are Inez Godman's article "Ten Weeks in a Kitchen," published in the *Independent* in 1901 and Lillian Pettingill's book *Toilers of the Home* (1905). Godman's investigation was inspired by her reading of the "Woman's Page," which featured "nothing but growls and groans over servants."¹⁰⁴ She endeavors to find out who is to blame for the friction between maids and mistresses by shedding her middle-class life and working briefly as a domestic herself.

Godman's article is chiefly concerned with the physical demands of domestic service. Of less interest to her are living conditions ("My room was small, but well furnished and heated"), the required uniform the lady provided, her wages, or the low social status of her position all of which were repeatedly cited by commentators as major

causes of the servant problem. She notes that when doing housework in her own home, she was saved by the ability to take frequent breaks, but as a servant the strain is constant. Ironing was a particularly strenuous job. She eventually learns some shortcuts, but does not find that she gets tougher, rather each week she weakens. Instead of asking her mistress to lighten her thirteen-hour day, she leaves her position in domestic service.¹⁰⁵

Even after her grueling experience, Godman admits that if she were forced to earn her living she would still work in domestic service. She might have lighter work as a second maid, but she would have to room with another girl, and would have less control over her environment.¹⁰⁶ The difference between the author's experience and that of any full-time servant is that Godman was able to give up service when her position became too much trouble or in some way undesirable. Most women did not have this choice. Although her brief experience as a maid taught her to require her own maid to retire at 9:00 after only a ten-hour day, the author does not appear to have gained any awareness of the inferior social position she placed her maids in.

Perhaps the best-known account of the "undercover reformers" is that of Lillian Pettingill, author of *Toilers of the Home: The Record of a College Woman's Experience as a Domestic Servant* (1905). Pettingill's 400-page work describes her experiences as "Eliza" in the homes of five different employers over a year spent in service. She documented her experiences in great detail including recreated dialogues with her employers and fellow servants. Her goals were similar to Ms. Godman's:

I have observed, heard, read and believed that the respectable American girls who work will cheerfully starve and suffocate in a mill, factory or big department store, or live almost any other kind of life, rather than grow healthy, fat and opulent in domestic service; and this when the housekeepers do all but stand on the street corners as they pass, beseeching them to come in and help. How can

my countrywomen, with their own living to make, be so blind to the butter side of their bread?¹⁰⁷

She has heard much about the servant problem from her housekeeping friends, but little from the perspective of the servant.

Presumably because she is a native-born American girl, Pettingill's experiences are likely different from those of the average immigrant servant. She receives many compliments on her fine appearance and some employers treat her better than other servants. Her encounter with a potential employer in the intelligence office teaches her how it feels to be treated like a commodity when "having considered me from top to toe, [Mrs. Alexander] remarked with such enthusiasm and for all the world as if I were a prize cow up for sale, 'you are a very nice *looking* girl; yes, a *very* nice looking girl.'"¹⁰⁸

Although few written sources explicitly note the desire for an attractive maid, Mrs. Alexander's comment suggests that she saw in Pettingill the traits of the idea maid so prominent in popular media. However, she decides not to hire Pettingill because she doesn't think she is physically capable of the work. A later employer, Mrs. Kinderlieber, thinks that Pettingill reminds of her recently deceased daughter because she is "so nice and refined looking and delicate."¹⁰⁹

Pettingill's refined appearance seems to make her employers more comfortable with inviting her into private spaces usually off-limits to servants. Her first employers, the Barrys, invite her to eat in the dining room with the family (although James, the African-American coachman eats alone in the kitchen). Their invitation makes Pettingill uneasy as she already feels her place: "I felt my isolation, alone in a big house full of people, with whom, though kindly and friendly, I could not feel one, for I was not one of them."¹¹⁰ Mrs. Kinderlieber also invites her to eat at her table (when there is no

company), something she has never allowed other “girls” to do, but Pettingill’s refinement makes her more acceptable. Still uncomfortable with the situation, Pettingill finds herself wishing that she were “a rough Irish girl” allowed to eat alone in the kitchen.¹¹¹ These employers treated her more like the “help” of earlier years, presumably because she had more in common with them than the immigrants they usually employed.

Pettingill’s finds her first three mistresses, although occasionally moody, relatively decent to work for. She meets her greatest challenge in the Scharff household, which consists of a couple and their daughter. They employ Pettingill as their chambermaid and waitress, who shares the household work with Frieda the German cook. Pettingill’s chief complaints with this position are the attitudes and demeanor of her mistress. Mrs. Scharff’s general rule is that she expects a full day’s work, even if she must provide busy work. She expects her help to have their days off when it is most convenient for her rather than the originally agreed upon schedule. In the end, Pettingill reflects that “Mrs. Scharff has worked me harder than she had any right. But that I wouldn’t mind if she would take the trouble to be decent. She nags when she’s pleasant, and when she’s not pleasant – well, I never worked for a woman with a bigger temper or less control of it; and I never will again.”¹¹² Her final employers, the Hollises, although more reasonable, expected a girl used to hard work, and Pettingill experiences swollen feet from being on them so much.¹¹³

Pettingill’s experiences with fellow servants are as varied as those with employers. While working for the Scharffs was unpleasant, her conditions are favorable in that Frieda, the Scharff’s German cook is affable and helpful. She finds the opposite situation at the Hollises, whose servants give her a very cold reception and do little to

help her adjust to her new place. Tilly, the cook, is particularly difficult. She constantly compares Pettingill to her predecessor, whom she liked very much and she withholds information, which makes Pettingill unable to do her job well. The one member of the servant staff who she speaks well of is Timothy, the African-American coachman, who manages to maintain a sense of calm during periods of strife among the servants.¹¹⁴

At the conclusion of her experiment in domestic service, Pettingill understands the working girl's aversion to this occupation. She offers several reasons why she no longer considers domestic service a good job: a lack of professional pride, unreasonable mistresses, unrelenting work, and the social stigma that prevents her from associating with her employers or people of their class outside of the kitchen. Although she admits that the job provides some benefits and she does like doing domestic tasks, she would not choose to be a servant for any length of time.¹¹⁵

Women who were not as fortunate to come and go from domestic service as Godman and Pettingill also had opportunities to tell their stories. Between 1902 and 1912, the *Independent* published eighty-two autobiographical essays by "undistinguished Americans." Editor Hamilton Holt sought to "typify the life of the average worker in some particular vocation and to make each story the genuine experience of a real person."¹¹⁶ These essays featured many types of employment, from sweatshop work to higher education, and the subjects included men and women from diverse ethnic backgrounds.¹¹⁷ Some wrote their own essays; those unable to were written by an interviewer and approved by the subject. Six essays focused on the lives of servants. The variety of servants featured (cook, nurse, washerwoman, and butler) illustrate the more specialized positions as opposed to the portraits of the maid-of-all-work created by

Godman and Pettingill. The servants depicted in the *Independent's* "lifelets" represented a group that was more likely to work as part of a staff in an upper-class household. These servants were African-American, Japanese, Irish, German, and French, and one unknown (probably native-born). These vignettes from behind the scenes provide some of the few examples of first-person servants' stories and reveal that although there are many common threads, experiences of servants could be quite varied.

Two of the lifelets depict a relatively positive picture of domestic service in the early twentieth century. "The Story of an Irish Cook" (1905) is perhaps the most upbeat, and reads as a standard rags-to-riches story. An immigrant family comes to America, starts out working in domestic service, and through dedication is able to move into more socially respectable jobs. Their children fare even better. The Irish cook, the essay's narrator, and her sister Tilly both start in the United States doing general housework. The sisters' Irish extraction never seems to have hindered their search, as it had for many others. Perhaps they benefited from the fact that by this time the presence of other immigrant groups had elevated the position of the Irish. They stayed with their employers for extraordinary lengths of time; the narrator worked for one family twenty-two years, her sister, eighteen. The author credits her success to the fact that "me and Tilly was clean in our work and we was decent, and, of course, we was honest. Nobody living can say that one of the McNabbs ever wronged him of a cent. Mrs. Carr's interests was my interests. I took better care of her things than she did and I loved the [children] as if they was my own."¹¹⁸ Overall, the Irish cook feels that she has done well by her move to America and her employment as a domestic. She also represents the opposite of

the stereotypical Irish servant as discussed above. The Irish cook had become an ideal servant through being dependable and loyal.

“The True Life Story of a Nurse Girl” (1903) also presents a relatively pleasant picture of servant life and shows an immigrant leading what she considers to be a successful life. Frustrated with low wages in her native Germany, Agnes looks forward to a better life in America: “I heard about how easy it was to make money in America and became very anxious to go there[.]”¹¹⁹ Two of her siblings had already migrated to the U.S. and were earning decent wages working as servants in wealthy households.

When she finally comes to America, Agnes finds a string of positions where she earns good wages and receives time off. Although she leaves two positions she finds unsatisfactory, she has no negative feelings about domestic service. On the contrary, she finds many advantages working for a wealthy family. As part of a staff of twelve, among which social distinctions also existed, she “dined with the housekeeper and butler of course – because we had to draw the line.” At this position she earned twenty-five dollars a month and got two afternoons off per week.¹²⁰ She spent summers at Newport and Long Island and felt well-provided for:

A girl working as I was working does not need to spend much. I seldom had to buy a thing, there was so much that came to me just the least bit worn. . . .
 . . . Wherever I have been employed here the food has always been excellent; in fact, precisely the same food as that furnished to the employer’s families. In Germany it is not so. Servants are all put on an allowance, and their food is very different from that given to their masters.¹²¹

Like the Irish cook, the nurse girl is pleased with her achievements. Not only has she found decent work, she is given time off, which allows her to enjoy outings with friends to her favorite place in New York, Coney Island.

A Frenchman, author of "A Butler's Life Story" (1910) has mixed feelings about the life of servants. Before coming to the U.S. the author had several jobs in his native France before going to England and getting work as a butler. He learns English at his first jobs and eventually leaves to take other positions with decent employers. He talks about a butler's work with a sense of pride: "Butler is soul of domestic establishment. He stand in middle responsible for all order. He is between servants and masters, and it depend on him that things are to go well."¹²² Despite being content with working in this capacity, one of his employers has trouble keeping cooks, so he begins preparing meals.

After being cheated while trying to buy a restaurant in France, he says to himself, "Why you not to America, the land of millionaires and bad cooking."¹²³ He has little good or bad to say about his first experiences working in America, and remains proud of his work: "Now I am great chef. All the millionaires know my cooking and some say, 'There is none like him – no not in all America.'" Despite his reputation, the author is displeased with the treatment of chefs in this country: "The rich people here they do not know that the chef has a soul, that he is an artist, as a poet or painter. They look upon chef as only animal, cattle." He decides to go back to being a butler and is for the most part satisfied with the life he has earned in America, although he believes the new rich "live like a pig in a palace." Englishmen are true gentlemen to work for but in America the wages are better.¹²⁴

The cook, nurse, and butler describe the benefits of domestic service that were possible if one found a good place. They identify the ideal from their perspectives: good wages, time off, and reasonable employers. Other lifelets illustrate that not all servants were so fortunate. They show the difficulties of taking stigmatized positions that

required long hours of menial work. While the previous life stories do not reveal the presence of ethnic prejudice, others do.

Of the four authors known to be immigrants, the writer of "The Confession of a Japanese Servant" (1905) was the only one unhappy with the life he found in America. Japanese and Chinese men were commonly found in the households of families on the west coast. He came to get an American education (which he was able to do), but learned more about the stigma of domestic service and its adverse effects on the intellect.

As a slightly-built Japanese boy of seventeen, he had difficulty finding any positions outside of domestic service. The work was hard since he was new to housework. Over the course of his employment he works in a boarding house, private homes, and on a steam yacht. Unlike the French butler, the Japanese servant has no pride in his position: "I am distinctly felt I am a servant, as the mistress artificially created the wide gap between her and me. . . . I know I am a servant full well, yet I wished to be treated as man."¹²⁵ Not only do his employers look down on him, but more well-off Japanese families and fellow students will not talk to him. The German nurse felt well-fed and cared for, but the Japanese servant has different experiences. The servants in one household were not allowed to laugh and talk aloud and were given meat fit only for the soup or dogs.¹²⁶ Ultimately, he concludes that being a servant is detrimental to the mind:

To be a successful servant is to make yourself a fool. This habitual submission will have a lamentable effect to the one's brain function. Day after day, throughout the years confined into the kitchen and dining-room, physically tired, unable to refresh yourself in the way of mental reciprocity, even the bright head will suffer if stay too long as a servant.¹²⁷

The story told by "A Washerwoman" (1904) illustrates the difficult hours and stigma experienced by servants doing general housework and explains why some women

chose the physically demanding work of laundry over that of the maid-of-all-work. The washerwoman does not divulge her ethnic background, although one might assume she is native-born since she enters the workplace due to a poor state of finances after her father's death, rather than as the result of emigrating to a new country. She tried department store work first, but she disliked it and found the wages impossible to live on. When she decides to look for a servant position, she deliberately seeks a job as a maid-of-all-work because she does not want to share a room. She is able to choose between seven places, but does not settle until finding "what seemed ideal – a clean, tidy, little house with a family of two – mother and son."¹²⁸

Although the place seemed ideal, she finds the work less so. She spends fourteen and fifteen hours a day on her feet with little opportunity to rest. She also had to sacrifice personal cleanliness while in this position – she was not allowed to use the family's bathroom and attempts to bathe in her own room were usually interrupted by the doorbell.¹²⁹ She explains her difficulties to the family washerwoman, who encourages her to take up laundry. She uses this advice and finds the situation is much more to her liking: "I am working steadily now and do not find it very disagreeable. I do not enjoy washing, but nearly all my work is ironing, and I take considerable pleasure in that part of it now that I have time to do it well."¹³⁰ She finally has better pay, more definite hours, and the freedom from work during off-hours.

However, she feels a stigma attached to her work, both as a housemaid and as a washerwoman. While working in general housework, she confided to a friend, "I can't see any of my friends. I'm ashamed to tell them where I am.' Now this is the worst of it. I had dear friends from whom I was drifting because I could not receive them in my

kitchen.”¹³¹ Despite considerable improvements in her living conditions as a washerwoman, she continues to feel shame working in the housework trades. A fellow boarder noted that she didn’t work weekends and asked her if she was a teacher. The washerwoman replied in the affirmative: “Why not let her think I taught? If she knew what I was doing she would be greatly grieved.”¹³²

The author of “More Slavery at the South: A Negro Nurse,” (1912) presents the African-American perspective of domestic service. Since age ten the nurse had done domestic work in a variety of positions – as “housegirl,” chambermaid, cook, and finally, a nurse. In thirty years, she had worked for only four families, unlike servants in previous life stories who changed jobs more frequently.¹³³ She establishes her credibility at the beginning of her story:

Belonging to the servant class, which is the majority class among my race at the South, and associating only with servants, I have been able to become intimately acquainted not only with hundreds of household servants, but also with the lives of their employers. I can, therefore, speak with authority of the so-called servant question; and what is said out of an experience of many years.¹³⁴

Some of the Negro nurse’s experiences were common among servants of all colors and ethnicities. She worked fourteen to sixteen hours a day for little pay and had little opportunity to spend time with her own children: “You might say that I’m on duty all the time – from sunrise to sunset, every day in the week. I am the slave, body and soul, of this family. And what do I get for this work – the lifetime bondage? The pitiful sum of ten dollars a month!”¹³⁵ She laments the lack of unions and other organizations that could fight for higher wages.

Race also affected the Negro nurse’s experiences. She states that two-thirds of African-Americans in her town are servants of some kind and she sees the conditions of

servants as being only a little better than slavery. Like slaves, she and other black female servants are placed in danger because their masters do not respect the virtues of black women. Servants who are sexually abused are powerless against their attackers; if one takes them to court she is sure to lose; if she succumbs she might get better treatment.¹³⁶ Sexual exploitation of servants by masters affected women of all colors and backgrounds. Servants were vulnerable prey due the power relationships of the household, their isolation, and the intimacy they experienced in the execution of their duties. However, the Southern caste system made it a more common experience for black servants.¹³⁷

Like "Part of the Family"?

These brief autobiographies provide several views of domestic service from the servant's perspective. Some felt that their lives had been improved through the position, others suffered from the stigma associated with it, or in the case of African-American servants, continued to be exploited as if they were slaves. The diversity of opinions expressed in the writings of mistresses and servants provide a model for the way house museums should interpret domestic service. Since there was no single experience that applies to all houses, tours can reflect what it meant to work in domestic service during the period they interpret through a variety of perspectives.

Awareness of the depiction of the ideal and the real servants emphasizes the complexity of the servant problem and the resources available to understand it. House museums have the opportunity to challenge their visitors to think critically about the way servants were perceived in the past and how they should be understood in our own time. This awareness also should discourage the tendency to focus primarily on the ideal

aspects of the servants' lives at a given historic site. It is important to remind visitors that they are seeing but one example of life "below stairs."

The description of servants as "like part of the family" is especially tricky, because it tends to represent only one perspective of the relationship. Elizabeth Clark-Lewis's study of African American servants in Washington, D.C. made this point dramatically. When she learned of the project, one of Clark-Lewis's acquaintances insisted that she meet "Nellie" who had worked for her family for over fifty years and was "just like a member of the family."¹³⁸ The author contacted Nellie Willoughby but used her great-aunt (who had attended the same church) as a reference instead and was able to schedule a meeting at Willoughby's home. Nellie shared many stories with Clark-Lewis and showed her pictures including those of white people placed around the room. "She told me they were her employers. Then she described each person to me. She said she kept their pictures around 'like people go to scary movies, to remind me of them people I hate.' When she saw my shocked expression, she laughed, 'That's the truth, honey!'"¹³⁹ Clark-Lewis's experience is a powerful reminder of the importance of considering the servant's perspective in interpretive tours, and the risk of presenting the real as ideal.

In the thirty years since historians began considering history "from the bottom up," historic sites of all kinds have struggled to find balanced ways to address a wider variety of audiences and themes. History museums and living history sites have blazed the trail for house museums by introducing academic professionalism, new content, and innovative techniques for interpreting women, working classes, and racial and ethnic minorities. The challenge of addressing real history rather than the ideal has also proved

to be an interesting challenge in museums whose foundations were built on the collection of "real things."

Notes

- ¹ Frances A. Kellor, ed., "The Housewife and Her Helper," *Ladies' Home Journal* (November 1905), 24.
- ² Annie Winsor Allen, "Both Sides of the Servant Question," *Atlantic Monthly*, April 1913, 505.
- ³ I. M. Rubinow, "The Problem of Domestic Service" *Journal of Political Economy* 14 (October 1906): 512.
- ⁴ In *Gosford Park*, the fact that the master of the house takes sexual advantage of some of his female servants is key to the movie's plot.
- ⁵ For an excellent analysis of television servant characters, see Michele Antoinette Johnson, "Imagined Inequalities: Servants on American Television Situation Comedies, 1960-1980" (Ph.D. diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 1995).
- ⁶ The federal census is taken in years ending in zero, and state census in years ending in five.
- ⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of Women at Work* (Washington, DC, 1907), 9, 32.
- ⁸ *Statistics of Women at Work*, 50.
- ⁹ Rubinow, 505.
- ¹⁰ *Statistics of Women at Work*, 9-11, 20.
- ¹¹ *Statistics of Women at Work*, 34.
- ¹² Daniel Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants: Domestic Service in the United States from 1800 to 1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 47. The aggregate census statistics use the following categories: native white of native-born parentage, native white of foreign or mixed parentage, and foreign-born white.
- ¹³ The data for marital status included the unknown in the "single" category. *Statistics of Women at Work*, 36, 38.
- ¹⁴ *Statistics of Women at Work*, 40.
- ¹⁵ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 54.

¹⁶ Mary Elizabeth Carter, *Millionaire Households and their Domestic Economy* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1903), 119.

¹⁷ States included in "New England" were Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. The Southern North Atlantic states included: New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. *Statistics of Women at Work*, 42.

¹⁸ *Statistics of Women at Work*, 42.

¹⁹ *Statistics of Women at Work*, 42-43.

²⁰ Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, *Living In, Living Out: African American Domesticity in Washington, D.C., 1910-1940* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994).

²¹ David M. Katzman, *Seven Days A Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 198-199.

²² This point is central to Ruth Schwartz Cowan's *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

²³ Elizabeth O'Leary, *At Beck and Call: The Representation of Domestic Servants in Nineteenth-Century American Painting* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 125.

²⁴ Veblen, 57, 59.

²⁵ Many women included "No laundry" in the advertisements they placed in the "Help Wanted" column as an incentive.

²⁶ Of the 205 articles indexed by the *Reader's Guide* during this period, fifty-nine ran between 1905-1909; eighty-six between 1910-1914; 31 between 1915-1918; and 29 between 1919-1921. The decline in articles about servants matches housewives' decreasing dependence on this labor. One should also keep in mind that some articles were not indexed in the *Reader's Guide*, nor were images of servants that appeared in advertisements.

²⁷ Frances Kellor, *Out of Work* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 123-4, 126.

²⁸ Elizabeth McCracken, "The Problem of Domestic Service: 1 – From the Standpoint of the Employer," *Outlook*, 15 February 1908, 372.

²⁹ Sutherland, 26.

³⁰ Faye E. Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1981).

³¹ Lucy Maynard Salmon, *Domestic Service* (New York and London: The Macmillan Company, 1901), 151.

³² Allen, "Both Sides of the Servant Problem," *Atlantic Monthly*, April 1913, 498; Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1996), 165.

³³ Jane Seymour Klink, "Put Yourself in Her Place," *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1905, 169-170.

³⁴ Sutherland, 3.

³⁵ Sutherland, 6-7.

³⁶ Lucy Maynard Salmon, "Recent Progress in the Study of Domestic Service," *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1905, 628-629.

³⁷ Klink, 170.

³⁸ Dudden, 16. At the same time that urban women wistfully remembered "help" in the pre-industrial period, rural women of the early twentieth century also experienced the servant problem. A 1913 report by the U. S. Department of Agriculture documented the difficulties of farm women. Their comments closely paralleled those made by their urban counterparts. According to an Illinois woman, "The woman in town can always hire some one to help by the day at least, but in the country that is not so—if she hires help she must make a companion of the girl and often take her along when she goes to town. There is no family privacy in the farm home where help is kept." Farm women also reported a change in the type of "hired man" employed on the farm, which is remarkably similar to the shift from "help" to "domestics" observed by many commentators on the servant problem: "One great trouble perhaps the greatest is the fact that here in New England whatever help is employed on the farm must to some extent be taken into the house. Formerly the 'hired man' was the son of a neighbor or perhaps the cousin or relative of the proprietor, so was not so bad; but now the help that it is possible to obtain is usually a very undesirable member of the household besides being another for the housewife to provide food for." "Dissatisfied With the Lives They Live: Farm Women Describe Their Work in a 1913 U.S. Department of Agriculture Report," *History Matters: The U. S. Survey Course on the Web*, <<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/101.html>> (3 May 2004).

³⁹ Mary E. Trueblood, "Housework versus Shop and Factories," *Independent*, 13 November 1902, 2693.

⁴⁰ Trueblood, 2693. Regarding the dislike for the term “servant,” Harriet Prescott Spofford countered: “But why should the term ‘servant’ be so offensive to those who undertake the duties that term describes? To hand your dishes, to prepare your food, to cleanse your rooms and scrub your floors, to wash and iron your clothes, to dress your hair and your feet—all that is service, and they who render it serve, and are exactly and precisely servants; and we are at a loss to see why the English language should be changed to suit a false pride on their part should they dislike to hear their work called by its own name.” Harriet Prescott Spofford, *The Servant Girl Question* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1881; reprint, Arno Press, 1977), 11.

⁴¹ Ruth Dunbar, “Not Wanted: Girl for General Housework,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, 31 May 1919, 52.

⁴² Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 64-5.

⁴³ Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 3.

⁴⁴ Lois Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 154.

⁴⁵ Kitch, 40.

⁴⁶ Kitch, 87, 93.

⁴⁷ Banner, 20; Katzman, 237.

⁴⁸ Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 157.

⁴⁹ Ophelia Simpson, who had been a servant in Washington, D.C. made this comment in an oral history interview with Elizabeth Clark-Lewis. Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, “‘This Work Had a End’: African-American Domestic Workers in Washington, D.C., 1910-1940,” in *To Toil the Livelong Day: America’s Women at Work, 1780-1980*, ed. Carol Groneman and Mary Beth Norton (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987), 202-203.

⁵⁰ O’Leary, 178. Curiously, the maid wears dark afternoon livery as opposed the traditional light-colored morning uniform. This may be due to artistic license, since the dark uniform stands out better in the light palette of the painting.

⁵¹ O’Leary, 180.

⁵² O’Leary, 161.

⁵³ O’Leary, 192.

⁵⁴ O'Leary, 224-225.

⁵⁵ For a more detailed discussion on the depiction of servants in nineteenth century painting, consult Elizabeth O'Leary's *At Beck and Call*. Other examples of picturesque servants in the background that she highlights are: Seymour J. Guy, *Going to the Opera (Family of William H. Vanderbilt)*, 1873; and Celia Beaux, *Ernesta (Child with Nurse)*, 1894.

⁵⁶ O'Leary, 195.

⁵⁷ O'Leary, 246, 244.

⁵⁸ Chapter Three, "Lilly Martin Spencer: Images of Women's Work and Working Women, 1840-1870," of O'Leary's *At Beck and Call* offers this argument in more detail.

⁵⁹ O'Leary, 88.

⁶⁰ April F. Masten, "Shake Hands? Lilly Martin Spencer and the Politics of Art," *American Quarterly* 56:2 (2004): 350, 374.

⁶¹ Quoted in O'Leary, 82.

⁶² Quoted in O'Leary, 96.

⁶³ David Lubin, "Lilly Martin Spencer's Domestic Genre Painting in Antebellum America," in *American Iconology*, ed. David C. Miller (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 161.

⁶⁴ Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 34.

⁶⁵ "The Correct Apron for Maids," *Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1910, 47.

⁶⁶ "Color is Now Smart for Maids' Uniforms," *Good Housekeeping*, January 1929, 73.

⁶⁷ Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1985), 133-36.

⁶⁸ Ellen Gruber Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 68-69, 72.

⁶⁹ Marchand, 166.

⁷⁰ Marchand, 202.

⁷¹ McCracken, 373.

⁷² Rubinow, 1906, 506.

⁷³ “MAID—WHITE RELIABLE, FOR GENERAL housework in small apt.; Protestant preferred;” “MAID—EXPERIENCED LADIES’ MAID, handy with needle; French preferred; only first class applicant need apply; references required.” *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, 18 May 1919, p.10, part 9.

⁷⁴ Carter, 68, 217.

⁷⁵ Mary Elizabeth Wilson Sherwood, *Manners and Social Usages* (New York and London: Harpers, 1918), 310.

⁷⁶ Hasia Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), xiv.

⁷⁷ Spofford, 25-26.

⁷⁸ Diner, 85.

⁷⁹ Sutherland, 59.

⁸⁰ [Mrs.] Christine Frederick, *The New Housekeeping: Efficiency Studies in Home Management* (Garden City and New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1925), 115. I.M. Rubinow also mentions that the advantages of immigrant servants are one exception in the case of immigration restrictions: “even such an authoritative body as the Industrial Commission sees one great objection to the educational test for immigrants. It would keep out the virtuous and industrious Irish girls who come to this country, seeking positions as domestic servants.” Rubinow, 1906, 507.

⁸¹ Dorothea Pearson Greene, “My Experiences With My Servants; Number One: Katie Quinn,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, March 1914, 38.

⁸² Izola Forrester, “The ‘Girl’ Problem” *Good Housekeeping*, September 1912, 374-82.

⁸³ The illustration was also published in *International Studio* 35 (July 1908): xxix. O’Leary, 254.

⁸⁴ O’Leary, 254-255.

- ⁸⁵ William R. Linneman, "Immigrant Stereotypes: 1880-1900" *Studies in American Humor* 1:1 (April 1947): 28.
- ⁸⁶ Katzman, 212.
- ⁸⁷ "Epitaph on a Cook," *Life* 46:1199 (19 October 1905), 468.
- ⁸⁸ Katzman, 184, 189.
- ⁸⁹ Katzman, 189, 192.
- ⁹⁰ Clark-Lewis, *Living In, Living Out*, 105-106.
- ⁹¹ O'Leary, 149.
- ⁹² O'Leary, 146.
- ⁹³ O'Leary, 134.
- ⁹⁴ O'Leary, 148.
- ⁹⁵ O'Leary, 185.
- ⁹⁶ O'Leary, 157-159.
- ⁹⁷ Advertisement for Aunt Jemima Pancake Flour, *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1929, 80.
- ⁹⁸ Mrs. James [Sallie May] Dooley, *Dem Good Ole Times* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1906), 5.
- ⁹⁹ Dooley, 21.
- ¹⁰⁰ Dooley, 25.
- ¹⁰¹ The image has been used in Hasia Diner's book *Erin's Daughters in America*, and the catalogue for an art museum exhibition entitled *Dirt & Domesticity*.
- ¹⁰² In addition, the *Encyclopedia of Etiquette* notes: "A waitress with uprolled sleeves, a blowsy head, and clumping shoes, or a butler who is not freshly shaven every day and cannot show immaculate hands and well brushed hair, is a reproach to the employers, who are either too indifferent or too grossly indulgent to exact careful and respectful service." Emily Holt, *Encyclopedia of Etiquette: What to Write, What to Wear, What to Do, What to Say: A Book of Manners for Everyday Use* (New York: McClure, 1901), 414, 418, 426.

- ¹⁰³ Susan Tucker, *Telling Memories Among Southern Women* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 270.
- ¹⁰⁴ Inez Godman, "Ten Weeks in a Kitchen" *Independent*, 17 October 1901, 2459.
- ¹⁰⁵ Godman, 2402.
- ¹⁰⁶ Godman, 2402.
- ¹⁰⁷ Lillian Pettingill, *Toilers of the Home: The Record of a College Woman's Experience as a Domestic Servant* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1905), v.
- ¹⁰⁸ Pettingill, 4.
- ¹⁰⁹ Pettingill, 48.
- ¹¹⁰ Pettingill, 20-21, 31.
- ¹¹¹ Pettingill, 55.
- ¹¹² Pettingill, 206, 229.
- ¹¹³ Pettingill, 258, 337-338.
- ¹¹⁴ Pettingill, 248-252; 263-264; 286-288.
- ¹¹⁵ Pettingill, 359-363; 373-376; 392.
- ¹¹⁶ David M. Katzman and William M. Tuttle, Jr., ed., *Plain Folk: The Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1982), xi.
- ¹¹⁷ Katzman and Tuttle, 195-198.
- ¹¹⁸ "The Story of an Irish Cook," *Independent*, 30 March 1905, 716.
- ¹¹⁹ Agnes M., "The True Life Story of a Nurse Girl" *Independent*, 24 September 1903, 2262.
- ¹²⁰ "The True Life Story of a Nurse Girl," 2263.
- ¹²¹ "The True Life Story of a Nurse Girl," 2264, 2265.
- ¹²² "A Butler's Life Story," *Independent*, 14 July 1910, 79.
- ¹²³ "A Butler's Life Story," 80.

- ¹²⁴ "A Butler's Life Story," 81-82.
- ¹²⁵ "The Confessions of a Japanese Servant," *Independent*, 21 September 1905, 664.
- ¹²⁶ "The Confessions of a Japanese Servant," 666-667.
- ¹²⁷ "The Confessions of a Japanese Servant," 667.
- ¹²⁸ "A Washerwoman," *Independent*, 10 November 1904, 1073-74.
- ¹²⁹ "A Washerwoman," 1074.
- ¹³⁰ "A Washerwoman," 1075.
- ¹³¹ "A Washerwoman," 1074.
- ¹³² "A Washerwoman," 1075.
- ¹³³ "More Slavery at the South: A Negro Nurse," in *Plain Folk: The Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans*, ed. David M. Katzman and William M. Tuttle, Jr. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 177-178. This life story was originally in the *Independent*, 25 January 1912, 196-200.
- ¹³⁴ "More Slavery at the South," 178.
- ¹³⁵ "More Slavery at the South," 179.
- ¹³⁶ "More Slavery at the South," 178, 180-181.
- ¹³⁷ Katzman, 216-218.
- ¹³⁸ Clark-Lewis, 184. Clark-Lewis felt she might be more successful using an African-American reference to introduce herself rather than the names of Nellie's white employers.
- ¹³⁹ Clark-Lewis, 186.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SEARCH FOR AUTHENTICITY:

SOCIAL HISTORY AT HISTORY MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC SITES

Even if today is rewarding and the past no golden age, historical immersion can alleviate contemporary stress. 'Come to Williamsburg . . . spend some time in gaol,' urges an advertisement showing tourists grinning in the eighteenth century stocks: 'it will set you free' – free from day-to-day cares in the workaday present. A desire to escape for a time from the tyranny of the modern lock-step world of digital watches and computers, to slacken the pace of life and regain a sense of rootedness.¹

David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*

The women, immigrants, and African Americans who constituted the servant population have been, until recently, excluded from depictions of everyday life in museums and at historic sites. The absence of these participants in historical interpretations became more noticeable in the late 1960s and early 1970s as the civil rights and feminist movements called attention to it. In the academic community, historians began to study history "from the bottom up," which included these previously underrepresented Americans. Three significant social histories of domestic service are evidence of the academic interest in new ways of approaching race, ethnicity, class, and gender in the late 1970s: David Katzman's *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (1978), Faye Dudden's *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America* (1981), and Donald Sutherland's *Americans and their Servants: Domestic Service in the United States from 1800 to 1920* (1981).

This new awareness was slower to take root in the realm of public history. The change began when the saturated academic job market of the mid-1970s sent many newly-minted Ph.D.s in search of other opportunities. A boom in museum growth

(encouraged by Bicentennial patriotism) provided them. Some saw these jobs as merely a detour on their road back to the ivory tower, but others made public history their permanent pursuit.² These scholars, some of the first to be influenced by the “new social history,” made an important impression on institutions traditionally associated with local elites and volunteer “history buffs.” As professional historians took the helm at history museums and historic sites and granting agencies encouraged or required their consultation on major exhibitions, museums increasingly became places where average Americans could find their own histories treated with the same respect formerly given only to those deemed great or extraordinary. The input of these historians also resulted in exhibitions that were more academically rigorous and held to higher standards of accuracy. After a long period in which little had changed in museum practice, the civil rights and feminist movements, the increased number of academic historians, and growing interest in a broader sense of local history challenged the established order.

Despite the significant progress made by museums to present a more diverse interpretation of history, for reasons ranging from financial to ideological, not all institutions have fully embraced the cultural changes of the past thirty years. The functions of the “authentic” and the “real” in museum practice create challenges that social history must negotiate to maintain and increase its influence. The preservation of “real” objects and places remain important to museum practice, but in many cases the emphasis on the authentic has prevented interpretations other than idealized ones. Even as new academic interests led to the collection of objects and stories from ordinary people, they often became little more than additions to the preexisting neat and tidy depiction of a pristine past.

Several factors have supported the ambitious use of a broader social history in museum interpretation. New methods of interpreting artifacts, away from a more antiquarian, object-centered approach to an analytical, scholarly one have complicated the way objects (or their absence) shape the narratives of exhibitions. Exhibition teams have come to rely more heavily on abstract concepts as the genesis or thesis of the physical exhibit, rather than depending solely on objects to drive the content. These “idea-based” exhibits have been among the most successful at incorporating the interests of social historians. While professional historians brought a new dedication to authenticity and documented evidence as the basis for interpretation, this commitment can actually undermine the purpose of social history if it is interpreted too literally, an issue best illustrated by living history museums, particularly Colonial Williamsburg. The concepts that history museums and living history historic sites use to negotiate real and ideal—objects, ideas, and authenticity—are the foundation for understanding the challenges of historic house museums.

Objects and Ideas

The object collection is traditionally the foundation for most museums and is central to the way the major professional organizations define them. To be accredited by the American Association of Museums (AAM), institutions must “present regularly scheduled programs and exhibits that use and interpret objects for the public according to accepted standards,” and “have a formal and appropriate program of documentation, care, and use of collections and/or tangible objects.” The International Committee on Museums (ICOM) defines a museum as “a nonprofit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires,

conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purpose of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment.” To receive funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), a federal granting agency, a museum must be “a public or private nonprofit agency or institution organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes, which, utilizing a professional staff, owns or utilizes tangible objects, cares for them, and exhibits them to the public on a regular basis.”³ Despite some minor differences, all definitions agree that the collection, care, and exhibition of objects are key parts of the museum mission. Interpretation of objects is noticeably absent in these descriptions, perhaps because they are meant to represent a very diverse constituency (zoos to art museums), but they suggest that exhibiting objects is an ideologically neutral process. However, the display of objects is a complicated and political act, whether museum professionals intend it to be or not.

In addition to being the foundation of the museum, the object collection usually is the primary attraction for visitors. In the introduction to *The Promise of Cultural Institutions*, David Carr identifies the unique position of museums and libraries in our society: “We seek authenticity and integrity, solace and guidance, an idea of what other hands have constructed or other minds have made clear. Cultural institutions are the only place in our world where this can happen—not in television, film, radio, or school.”⁴ Consider the massive and eclectic collection of the Smithsonian Institution, particularly of the National Museum of American History (NMAH). This treasure trove preserves and displays such iconic objects as the original “Star Spangled Banner,” Julia Child’s kitchen, the Woolworth lunch counter made famous by the civil rights movement, Mister

Rogers' sweater, and the First Ladies' gowns. Millions are drawn to the "Nation's Attic" to get a glimpse at the "real things" they have read about or seen on television.

Rosenzweig and Thelen's survey of Americans' uses of the past indicated that people trust museums more than any other source of information about the past because they provide an "unmediated experience" with "authentic objects." Respondents noted that they enjoy making personal connections with the artifacts on display.⁵ Object-centered museums like the Smithsonian provide a variety of experiences with objects on a spectrum, from seeing them removed from context in a display case or as part of the narrative in an interpretive exhibition.

Scholars and museum professionals have voiced many opinions about the best way to present authentic objects to the public. In "History Museums and the Culture of Materialism," Michael Ettema recognizes two different approaches to objects, the traditional formalist and the newer analytical practices.⁶ The formalist approach placed objects at the center of interest and focused on the concrete aspects of history. Regardless of the limitation of interpretation to antiquarian interests, display of objects did have an ideological purpose. Since they were thought to be physical examples of their makers' spirit and genius and thus models of a self-evident morality, objects could serve to civilize the population, teach it appreciation for visual quality, and reinforce "traditional American values" like individualism and simplicity.⁷

In his influential article "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," material culture scholar Jules David Prown introduced many elements of the formalist method. Prown's definition of material culture has become the foundation of museum practice: "Material culture is the study through artifacts of the

beliefs—values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions—of a particular community or society at a given time.”⁸ He argues that since historical objects are the only witnesses to the past, they provide “direct sensory experience of surviving historical events.”⁹ This approach places a high priority on the authenticity and physical characteristics of the artifacts in question.

However, beyond the artifacts themselves, the construction of an exhibition creates relationships between individual items that reflect the curator or collector’s point of view, even if that opinion is not verbally stated. For example, Charles Wilson Peale organized his natural history collection to illustrate the philosophy of his time, which is evident in his self-portrait, *The Artist in His Museum* (1822):

The Long Room was a precise statement of classical order. Its pristine white wall cases contained row on row of birds, each labeled as to genus and species. In the top row were the predators, in the middle the songbirds, and nearest the floor ducks, pelicans, and the earthbound penguins. . . . The first historical objects in Peale’s museum, the busts and paintings occupied places of honor and were intended to evoke reverence. Placed as they were at the highest point of the room, they also evoked an Enlightenment version of the ‘great chain of being,’ with statesmen and scientists presiding over the natural order of a new age.¹⁰

Although the formalist approach regards history as “fact,” its practitioners’ interpretation may be clearly visible.

The analytical approach to objects is a more conscious recognition of the narrative power of objects when understood in their historical contexts. This perspective is a result of the larger number of academics working in public history and their use of social history to interpret the past. Objects become part of a larger system of meaning that focuses on abstract explanations of concrete historical events and a method for using history to understand the present.¹¹ As opposed to exhibits with an object-centered

approach, the analytical perspective is manifested in what is known as the “interpretive exhibit,” in which curators support a thesis with historical artifacts and archival materials. These exhibits are the museum analogue to the scholarly publication, and on occasion the length and complexity of interpretive labels (the proverbial “book on the wall”) shrinks the distance between the two.

Unlike Prown’s approach, the “idea-centered” exhibit does not rely solely on the artifacts to tell the whole story. Spencer Crew and James Sims explore the issue of “idea over objects” in their essay, “Locating Authenticity: Fragments of a Dialogue,” which begins by casting doubt on Prown’s concept of the object as a witness:

The problem with things is that they are dumb. They are not eloquent, as some thinkers in art museums claim. They are dumb. And if by some ventriloquism they seem to speak, they lie. The mendacity of objects is all too familiar to makers of collections and exhibitions: once removed from the continuity of everyday uses in time and space and made exquisite on display, stabilized and conserved, objects are transformed in the meanings they have been said to carry: they become monuments of ownership, commodities.¹²

For Crew and Sims, authenticity is about authority: “Objects have no authority; people do.”¹³

For example, at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, the story drives the permanent exhibition in a situation where the objects in themselves have the ability to overwhelm the presentation. Professor Edward Linenthal’s experience with selecting artifacts for display at the Holocaust Museum illustrates this power and the occasionally complicated questions curators ask when choosing objects to drive the exhibition’s narrative:

I was both attracted to and repelled by such items as cans of Zyklon-B, and I was bothered by my reaction. Was it impossible not to fall victim to some ghoully desire to ‘see’ one of these cans? What was the purpose of seeing it? Of displaying it in a museum? Would it really be simply part of the physical

evidence that the Holocaust happened; would it serve to teach visitors about the process of destruction; or was it precisely because of these canisters had been used to kill millions that they carried a power, a fascination that made it impossible *not* to include them in a museum display, a different kind of artifact in a terrible cabinet of curiosities?¹⁴

The emotional effect of artifacts can be difficult to predict since the public's desire to make personal connections during their museum visits means an infinite number of interpretations is possible. The analytical approach of the interpretive exhibit tempers the power of artifacts by placing them in contexts that enhance the particular meaning desired by the curator. However, creating the context raises the question of who has the authority to speak for objects on display. Traditional curators tend to have an object-centered approach, and professional historians usually push the abstract and theoretical concepts rather than the concrete. Ettema suggests that overemphasizing either the formalist or analytical approaches to objects is ultimately undesirable.¹⁵

The formalist approach has been the typical method at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum (NASM) where the focus is on the machines and technology rather than the historical contexts of which they were a part. The proposed exhibition to accompany the *Enola Gay* (initially entitled "The Crossroads: The End of World War II, The Atomic Bomb, and the Origins of the Cold War", later "The Last Act") challenged this tradition with its analytical approach to an emotionally charged artifact. In the years following the original exhibition's cancellation and the eventual display of the plane's fuselage accompanied only by a descriptive label and video program, the debate over the planned content took on a life of its own. It has become the subject of several books, articles, and roundtables, offering members of the academy and the museum profession

opportunities to ruminate on the causes, effects, and long-term ramifications of the conflict.¹⁶

The objects to be displayed in “The Last Act” were emotionally charged in ways that frustrated the curators’ attempts to balance the interpretive content with the power of the artifacts. The fuselage of the *Enola Gay*, gleaming from a \$1 million restoration, was to be the centerpiece. This artifact symbolized many feelings, from patriotism and pride in military service, to the relief felt by those spared a transfer to the Pacific and a general happiness that the war was over, to anguish over the brutality of the bomb and the fear that characterized the Cold War. Martin Harwit, director of the National Air and Space Museum (NASM) and curators Tom Crouch and Michael Neufeld had to negotiate how to respect the various reactions of visitors to the *Enola Gay* itself and still provide the rich historical context they felt it deserved. Crouch expressed concern over the integrity of the exhibit’s content early on in correspondence with Harwit: “Do you want to have an exhibition intended to make veterans feel good, or do you want to have an exhibition that will lead our visitors to think about the consequences of the atomic bombing of Japan? Frankly, I don’t think we can do both.”¹⁷

Exhibitions are inherently visual productions, even in those employing the analytical approach. Harwit believed that “Ultimately the display of objects would take the upper hand, setting the mood for the gallery, particularly for the casual visitor who wanted only to see the *Enola Gay* and one or two other primary artifacts. For them the words would play merely a subordinate role.” For those with a serious interest in the subject, the text would accommodate their interests.¹⁸ Harwit’s desire to please the widest possible audience illustrates the common museum studies theory that visitors tend

to break down into three groups according to amount of time they spend in exhibitions: streakers, strollers, and studiers. Having considered the two extremes, he does not suggest how “strollers,” who likely read some but not all the text and look at some but not all the visual material, might respond. In any case, Harwit thought the museum needed to avoid suggesting that the exhibit was simply going to celebrate raw power, which would be achieved through interpretive units before and after the central gallery that examined how the decision to drop the bomb was made and the damage and suffering it caused.¹⁹

A collection of smaller, but no less powerful, artifacts in the gallery next to the plane was to balance the strong emotions evoked by the *Enola Gay*. The curators negotiated with Japanese museums a loan of objects found at ground zero, including a watch stopped at the moment of the bomb’s impact, scorched clothing, and a schoolgirl’s lunchbox containing carbonized peas and rice. Graphic images of the bomb’s devastation of the city and its population would further heighten the objects’ emotional impact by drawing the visitor’s attention to these physically small and modest objects.²⁰

Most criticism of the exhibition was based on the first draft of the script, which was leaked to the press. These critics did not have the benefit of experiencing the text juxtaposed with the visual and physical components of the exhibition. They were provided photocopies of these materials, but their evaluation would most likely be heavily influenced by the power of the text. Without the size and presence of the objects, the labels made the entire exhibition seem imbalanced. Some of the controversial content, when read without the images, does portray the American position in a negative light. A series of “Historical Controversies” were to be mounted in the gallery visitors

would visit before seeing the *Enola Gay*, including a particularly contentious question “Was the Decision to Drop the Bomb Justified?” It was difficult for those initial readers to know how a visitor would answer that question without understanding the physical and visual context in which it would appear.

For many critics, displaying the *Enola Gay* alone, accompanied by the “fact” that the plane dropped the first atomic bomb was all that was necessary. I. Michael Heyman, then the newly inaugurated Secretary of the Smithsonian, initially opposed this type of display:

The Smithsonian could have avoided controversy by ignoring the anniversary, simply displaying the *Enola Gay* without comment, setting forth only the justification for the use of atomic weapons without either reporting the contrary arguments or indicating the impact of bombs on the ground. My view is that the Smithsonian has a broader role than simply displaying items in the so-called nation’s attic or eschewing important topics because of the political difficulties created by an exhibition.²¹

Despite what appeared to be solid support from the new Secretary, he ultimately backed down, canceled the exhibition, and made displaying the plane “without comment” the only option.

Like many history museums in the 1980s and 1990s, the Smithsonian museums were in the process of shifting from object-based, celebratory approaches to more idea-based exhibits based on rigorous academic scholarship that would intellectually challenge visitors. Then-secretary Robert McCormick Adams was an advocate for the new methods, and several exhibitions that successfully combined the display of objects with the scholarly interest in a broader social history including “Field to Factory” and “A More Perfect Union” at the National Museum of American History. These exhibitions were well-received by all audiences, but this success began to unravel with the opening

of “The West as America,” a reinterpretation of images of the frontier at the National Museum of American Art in 1991. “The Last Act” would bring a similar approach into the most popular of the Smithsonian museums.

Many of the exhibition’s critics, particularly those in Congress who pressured the museum to abandon the project, cited the intrusion of left-leaning intellectuals into a display that should be “objective.” They made a clear distinction between the academy and the museum—or as House Speaker Newt Gingrich (himself a Ph.D. in history) termed it, “the faculty lounge” and “national treasure”—a gap that historians and museum professionals have long indicated needs to be bridged.²² According to a *Wall Street Journal* editorial, “What can’t be altered is the clear impression given by the Smithsonian that the American museum whose business it is to tell the nation’s story is now in the hands of academics unable to view American history as anything other than a woeful catalog of crimes and aggressions against the helpless peoples of the earth.”²³

The anti-intellectual elements of the controversy were further fueled by claims of difference between interpretation and facts. The “history-as-fact” group consisted primarily of conservatives, but wasn’t completely partisan. During the Hearings of the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, Senator Dianne Feinstein (a Democrat) expressed her dismay over a perceived change in the practice of history:

“In the days when I studied history the text . . . was essentially a recitation of fact, leaving the reader to draw their own analysis. Now what you see is a writer’s interpretation of fact, which is different. I think in a sense what happened with the *Enola Gay* was interpretation. . . . I wonder about the wisdom of presenting any interpretation.”²⁴

Although politics ultimately doomed the exhibition, the failure of critics to recognize that every exhibit, regardless of whether it takes an object-centered “history-as-fact” or

analytical “history-as-interpretation” approach, is a social construction also contributed to its demise. As Michael Baxandall has argued, “To select and put forward any item for display, as something worth looking at, as interesting, is a statement not only about the object but the culture it comes from. . . . There is no exhibition without construction and therefore—in an extended sense—appropriation.”²⁵

The *Enola Gay* battle also coincided with the 1994 election in which Republicans took control of both houses of Congress, the so-called “Republican Revolution.” This newly achieved majority could create the pressure necessary to force cancellation of the exhibition and demand the ouster of those involved with creating it. The Smithsonian’s position as a national museum with federal funding on the line (72 percent of its operating budget came from federal appropriations) made it vulnerable to a direct political attack to which most independent private non-profit museums are less susceptible.

The *Enola Gay* controversy exemplifies some of the fierce opposition experienced by museum personnel who wish to take a challenging analytical approach to a popular site or artifact. The exhibition’s cancellation is disappointing, but the conversations it started about the construction of exhibitions are necessary for museum professionals, historians, and the public, in particular by challenging the long-held understanding of museums as collections keepers. While the *Enola Gay* exhibition was not an example of social history, it illustrates the difference between object- and idea-based displays, and its lessons apply to social historians looking to explore the latter. Even though the exhibition was never completed or installed, it did succeed as an educational process for museum professionals, if not the public.

Exhibiting the New Social History

One reason that race, ethnicity, class, and gender have lacked a strong interpretive presence in museums is due to a dearth of artifacts or archival materials related to these issues. That fact, combined with the increasing role of academics (whose work is traditionally text-based) fed the emergence of exhibits based on ideas rather than objects. After a long tradition of displaying the material culture of the local elite, the Museum of the City of New York mounted groundbreaking issue-oriented exhibitions in the 1960s and 1970s that addressed drug addiction, alcoholism, and venereal disease. New approaches to the interpretation of objects (or their absence) and the efforts of museum staff to reach out and share their authority with the community have been key ingredients in the most successful social history exhibitions.

The analytical approach has contributed to a reconception of the museum's public role from a bastion of the local elite to a community-based institution. Duncan Cameron's 1971 essay, "The Museum, A Temple or the Forum," provided an early call for transforming the museum. He proposed "not only exhibition halls and meeting places that are open to all, but also programs and funds for them that accept without reservation the most radical innovations in art forms, the most controversial interpretations of history, of our own society, of the nature of man, or, for that matter, of the nature of the world."²⁶ The idea-centered method is very supportive of such interpretations and the encouragement of dialogue among visitors. While museums have yet to fully embrace "the most controversial interpretations of history," they have reoriented themselves to be friendlier to community interaction. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has noted that, "Museums were once defined by their relationship to objects: curators were 'keepers' and

their greatest asset was their collections. Today they are defined more than ever by their relationship to visitors.”²⁷ The “community center” approach is particularly evident at urban and ethnic museums, where residents of diverse neighborhoods are encouraged to play a central role in exhibitions by providing artifacts, photographs, and oral histories. Michael Frisch has coined the phrase “shared authority” to describe this active involvement of the public in museum activities.²⁸ John Kuo Wei Tchen pioneered a similar inquiry-driven approach at The Chinatown History Museum in New York, which he describes as a “dialogic museum” using a similar inquiry-driven approach.²⁹

Museums of African American history and culture that grew out of the civil rights movement were some of the first to redefine the role of museums, according to Jeffrey C. Stewart and Fath Davis Ruffins:

Rather than holders of precise artifacts, stored and exhibited in isolated splendor, Afro-American historical museums became cultural centers, providing outlets for many separate and sometimes contradictory impulses in local black communities. Black-supported museums such as Burroughs’ DuSable museum in Chicago fostered a ‘living environment’ and fulfilled social and entertainment functions as well as presenting historical artifacts and art.³⁰

Celebrations of the United States Bicentennial fostered growing interest in community history, ultimately leading to a dramatic increase in the number of museums in minority communities and a focus on African Americans, people of color, and specific ethnic groups.³¹ Major museums of African American history have opened in Detroit, Michigan, and Wilberforce, Ohio, and a national museum on the Mall in Washington, D.C. is in the planning stages.³²

At museums that have their roots in the white elite, race has been and continues to be a difficult subject to interpret with sensitivity and sophistication. It is both abstract and concrete, and presents a challenge in terms of artifacts since they are either no longer

extant, or those that have survived (slave shackles and KKK hoods, for example) are emotionally overwhelming or represent predominately white views of race. However, the success of several exhibitions demonstrates that visitors appreciate the courage to address race in thoughtful and provocative manners. In 1987, the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History opened "Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration, 1915-1940," [Figures B-56 and B-57] which traces the experiences of African Americans who moved north during the Jim Crow era. Curator Spencer Crew's interpretation combines artifacts from the National Museum of American History's collection of farm equipment and industrial machinery with the personal stories and artifacts of the African-American community:

In 'Field to Factory,' we didn't just use objects to tell a Black story, we also went out and asked the Black community to donate objects to help recreate an important part of American history. That in itself draws people in to the institution because they feel honored when the dress that their grandmother wore when she moved up North goes into the same Smithsonian museum that preserved George Washington's false teeth.³³

Artifacts include a cotton gin, school bell, a Ku Klux Klan robe, and objects from Marjorie Stewart Joyner's successful beauty salon. "Field to Factory" illustrates how the idea behind an exhibition may encourage curators to brainstorm the objects they would like to have tell their story and then look to the community to provide them.

Some elements of "Field to Factory" are reproductions that facilitate the display of "authentic" objects or the experience of specific emotions. These recreated scenes from stages of the journey, complemented by oral histories and photographs, add dimension to the story. The exhibition is not particularly interactive, with one significant exception. To enter the train station to get transportation north, visitors must choose between two doors, one marked White and the other Colored. It is a simple, but

effective, component. Although a reconstruction, the curators argue that it was indeed an “authentic” experience: “At the doors of the Ashland station, the condition of legal segregation is authentic. The object is a reproduction, somewhat diagrammatic in form but not metaphorical.”³⁴ The exhibition has also been popular among visitors, so much so that what was intended to be a temporary exhibition is on display indefinitely.

A more recent and potentially explosive exhibition dealing with race, “Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America,” documents lynching between the 1880s and 1960s. Based on materials from the Allen-Littlefield Collection at Emory University, the images made their first public appearance as a book of the same title. Since its first display at a gallery in New York City created demand for more viewing opportunities, “Without Sanctuary” has taken several different forms at venues in other cities. The New York Historical Society exhibition focused primarily on the photographs, and the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania included a local angle to supplement the general approach taken by the exhibition.

However, the most recent venue, the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta, Georgia, has chosen to “[emphasize] reconciliation through the pursuit and presentation of truth” by including interracial anti-lynching literature and artifacts, and black spiritual music playing in the gallery among other contextual material. Longer interpretive labels and interactive computer stations also provided access to more information about the images’ context.³⁵ The King site had the most difficulty bringing the show to fruition. With the last recorded lynching in Georgia as recent as 1965 and the lack of a southern precedent for an exhibition on this subject, curators took two and a half years to plan the exhibition as they collaborated with scholars from Emory University,

the King Site, and with the public during a series of forums. What began as a display of photos evolved into a comprehensive learning experience. To some extent, the King site took the focus off the images themselves and put it on the reasons why these photos came to exist and how people should understand them today. All three “Without Sanctuary” exhibitions have drawn massive crowds. In Georgia, the exhibit drew more than fifty thousand people in just the first two months.³⁶

Besides noting the high visitation, reviewers of the exhibit have indicated little about how viewers have personally reacted to it. Visitors to the well-executed virtual edition of “Without Sanctuary” were able to record their reactions in the “Forum” section, an online comment book. A survey of these entries suggests that such exhibitions, while unsettling and potentially controversial, are appreciated by their audiences. The most frequent comments indicate feelings of horror, grief, shame, and disbelief. Several visitors who identified themselves as African Americans made connections to their own experiences of racism: “You have to be black to know the injustices that are used against us. You may try to justify these acts by saying that some of the people were criminals, but it’s so truly sad that many weren’t. They were hanged for the color of their skin.”³⁷ Some visitors responded to comments written prior to their visit, suggesting that many not only viewed the images but also the reactions of others. While many used the forum as an opportunity to express their grief, they also expressed gratitude for the availability of this exhibition.

“A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the U.S. Constitution,” [Figures B-58 and B-59] opened at the National Museum of American History in 1987 in conjunction with the Constitution’s bicentennial celebration. It is an excellent example

of a thematically driven exhibition that gives corporality to ethnic prejudice and the abstract freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. This very detailed and moving exhibition documents the lives of Japanese Americans during World War II: their removal to internment camps, survival behind barbed wire, requirement of loyalty oaths, service in the U.S. military, and their lives following release. The exhibition “tells the story of Japanese Americans who suffered a great injustice at the hands of the government, and who have struggled ever since to insure the rights of all citizens guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.”³⁸ “A More Perfect Union” employs photographs, objects, and powerful oral histories without excusing the government’s actions during this bleak moment in U.S. history.

The museum’s online version of the exhibit strongly suggests the significance of ideas and stories as the motivation for “A More Perfect Union.” The text and copious images are used well, and one could easily see this exhibit transformed into a very effective book. The exhibit does include artifacts, such as trunks and work implements, and they are represented on the web site by color images linked to information about the object and its context [Figure B-60]. However, unlike most “virtual” exhibits, not being able to experience the three-dimensional elements does not detract from “A More Perfect Union’s” effectiveness.

One of the most significant aspects of the exhibition’s success is its ability to take a critical stand against a government action, while at the same time celebrating the Constitution’s bicentennial. This anniversary typically is not accompanied by the national observances associated with other patriotic holidays such as Veteran’s Day and Independence Day, which may have contributed to its success. “A More Perfect Union”

did not prompt attacks against the Smithsonian and its curators. The final section presents an honest description of the Constitution's fallibility by including a powerful statement by U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Charles Evan Hughes:

You may think that the Constitution is your security—it is nothing but a piece of paper. You may think that the statutes are your security—they are nothing but words in a book. You may think that elaborate mechanism of government is your security—it is nothing at all, unless you have sound and uncorrupted public opinion to give life to your Constitution, to give vitality to your statutes, to make efficient your government machinery.³⁹

“A More Perfect Union” is still on display at the NMAH, and an extremely well-executed web site offers long-distance visitors a very satisfying experience of its content, perhaps because it features predominately two-dimensional elements.⁴⁰ The virtual exhibition encourages conversation by providing visitors with a “Reflections” section where they may record their reactions to the material. The web site updates the relevance of the exhibition's story to the post-9/11 world through a postscript that reminds visitors that Constitutional rights of *every* citizen must continue to be honored, a fitting conclusion to a very thought-provoking examination of freedom.

The cancellation of the *Enola Gay* exhibition may have caused the Smithsonian's curators to back off potentially contentious subjects and interpretation, but not for long: the NMAH opened “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: A History of American Sweatshops, 1820-Present” in 1998. The curators built the exhibition around a collection of sewing machines, letters written by workers that were never mailed, and personal items seized in a raid of an El Monte, California apparel sweatshop, which the museum acquired in 1996. Some critics warned that the exhibition could be “another *Enola Gay*,” especially after the curators lost the support of the fashion industry.⁴¹ However, the NMAH's cautious approach was greatly informed by the mistakes made by curators of

the earlier exhibition. Peter Liebhold, co-curator of the exhibition, echoed the supporters of the *Enola Gay* exhibition when he commented, "It is important for a museum to show social consciousness, to take responsibility, and to do something that matters. Museums cannot afford to tell the same old hero stories, otherwise they just become a tool of advertisers, corporations, and other elements of the establishment."⁴²

One notable element of "Between a Rock and a Hard Place" is the variety of voices that tell the story, a technique that allows for a more balanced narrative and reflects Frisch's concept of "shared authority." Ultimately, it is the voices and the ideas that shape the exhibition rather than objects, despite the El Monte collection's role as the centerpiece. The introduction includes a statement written and signed by Spencer Crew, the NMAH director, and Lonnie Bunch, Associate Director for Curatorial Affairs, with the heading "Why Do Museums Mount This Kind of Exhibition?" Surrounded by reproduced newspaper clippings supporting and opposing the show, their statement explained:

History museums interpret difficult, unpleasant, or controversial episodes, not out of any desire to embarrass, be unpatriotic, or cause pain, but out of a responsibility to convey a fuller, more inclusive history. By examining incidents ripe with complexities and ambiguities, museums hope to stimulate greater understanding of the historical forces and choices that shaped America.⁴³

Statements like this one give transparency to the work of curators with the hope that the public will learn something about the process of "history making" while taking in the exhibition's intellectual content. It may also be an attempt to reformulate the visitor's understanding of the museum's evolution beyond its role as a keeper of objects.⁴⁴

"Between a Rock and a Hard Place" does return to the institutional voice for some sections, including its presentation of the history of sweatshops in the United States, a

section entitled “Fashion Food Chain” that puts the El Monte story into the context of modern apparel production, and a documentary-style video on good industry practices. The El Monte section featured the words of the workers themselves, including letters they wrote to family overseas that the sweatshop owners intercepted. These excerpts depict the hardships experienced by sweatshop workers, as in this letter by Kijja Pimolsing, “I really miss Thailand. If I knew it would be like this, I wouldn’t have decided to come here . . . Samli, please tell me what to do. Sometimes I really think about running away from here but I don’t have any documents.”⁴⁵

The “Dialogue” section included the voices of six national spokespersons—a manufacturer, community activist, retailer, union representative, government official, and celebrity endorser. Their responses to the question “What should Americans know about sweatshop production in the U.S.?” were mounted discretely with a brief biography and selection of artifacts provided by the spokespersons.⁴⁶ Despite the diversity of the spokespeople’s perspectives, the statements are quite similar. As one would expect, they all make statements opposing sweatshops and suggest solutions [Figures B-61 and B-62]. The photos and objects that the spokespeople provided for their display are primarily used to complement their statements.

The Dialogue section also gave visitors the chance to answer the same question posed to the spokespeople. The visitor reaction was generally positive and intelligent. They wrote about personal connections to the issue, historical context, unionization, the Depression, and NAFTA. Mary Alexander’s review of the comment books indicated that visitors do get the message in these complex exhibitions. She believes the exhibition provided the following lessons:

(1) Visitors do appreciate the complexities of the past, are not offended by them, and in some cases seek guidance for their own actions based on historical mistakes. (2) The negative aspects of our past offer lessons for our future and do not put off the audience, neither young visitors or old. (3) Present your topic and ask visitors to add their voices, and they will do so with intelligence, sophistication, and more than a little wit.⁴⁷

Many appreciated the controversial content and the museum's courage, but also wanted more direction in terms of what they should do next. A final panel asked the question "Is it getting better?" Curators didn't provide an answer but rather an explanation of "the complexity of being able to answer the question."⁴⁸ One solution would have been a take-away reference sheet that included contact information for related organizations. However, the political nature of such an action was probably not possible in a national institution that is expected to present objective, disinterested interpretations, especially in light of the *Enola Gay* controversy.

"Between a Rock and a Hard Place," like "A More Perfect Union," was driven primarily by ideas. The "Dialogue" section was a particularly significant element and had little to do with the collections. Although the exhibit used the materials from the El Monte raid as the centerpiece and the initial motivation, reviewers have not found them as effective as they might have been. In his review for *The Journal of American History*, Richard Stott makes two important observations about the use of objects, also acknowledging the power of the narrative: "Sweatshops are not subjects that lend themselves to arresting artifacts: coats and dresses, sewing machines, pinking shears, and cigar molds are not likely to fascinate most people. The exhibit therefore relies mostly on pictures to tell its story and has done a fine job of combining interesting photographs and artifacts into a compelling narrative."⁴⁹ The lack of "arresting objects" is an issue curators of social history exhibits are likely familiar with, since the interpretation of

ordinary people typically involves rather ordinary objects instead of the exotic and rare pieces that have been the primary focus of museum exhibits. Stott also comments on the problems associated with displaying artifacts out of context:

A re-creation of 'one of the most horrendous sweatshops of modern times' is located in a corner of the exhibit hall and features two sewing benches from El Monte framed by a chain-link fence topped with 'razor wire from the El Monte compound.' However, even the dramatic lighting cannot make two sewing machines look very ominous, and in photographs El Monte appears roomier and more pleasant than the sweatshops portrayed in the historical sections. Only the video that tells the story of the workers involved makes it clear how terrible conditions were there.⁵⁰

The El Monte artifacts were assumed to have the power of being witness to history; they are authentic, the real things from a real sweatshop. However, without the supplementary materials like the video, the real object, although certainly not ideal, is rendered ineffective as a symbol of the horror of sweatshops.⁵¹

The above examples illustrate that idea-based exhibitions that effectively use artifacts, real or recreated, can make social history successful in history museums. The Smithsonian has excellent academic connections and talented professional staff by virtue of its leadership position in the museum community. In this regard, it is an exceptional case. Smaller history museums, particularly those on the county level, usually lack the funding and personnel and collections resources to imitate the success of its national counterpart. A county historical museum is unlikely to feel the political pressure that a federally-funded national museum does, but these venues can face similar ideological challenges from their audiences, boards, and long-term volunteers.

In a series of articles responding to Rosenzweig and Thelen's *The Presence of the Past*, Rebecca Conrad noted the limitations that smaller museums face when they attempt to make major adjustments to interpretation:

In a local institution, reconceptualizing the interpretive framework is likely to be an unobtainable luxury. Even assuming that a director had both time and budget for a new interpretive plan, the likely outcome would be to perpetuate more of the same because the narrowly drawn storylines of local history typically are based on a mythological past that is interwoven with selected family histories.⁵²

Thus, the local “politics” have the potential to stifle progress at small history museums, where the immediate community may be more directly involved with the institution as donors, volunteers, and patrons than at large museums like the Smithsonian. The sense of ownership and pride in these institutions can be an obstacle if a new interpretation threatens the community’s identity (or the influential segment of it) by diminishing its “mythological past.”

Despite this difficulty, several smaller museums, such as those that interpret city, state, or regional history, have put extraordinary effort into interpreting their past through the lens of social history. In “Social History and Local Museums,” David Peterson described the process of creating social history exhibitions at the Otter Tail Historical Society in rural Minnesota. His first attempt, “Dirt and Diligence: Trying to Stay Clean in a Dirty World, 1870-1920,” addressed the “significant, yet overlooked activity” of keeping bodies, clothing, and houses clean using the most recent scholarship on housework as a starting point.⁵³ Reflecting on the exhibition, Peterson was pleased with its accessibility to a diverse audience and several interpretive layers to satisfy different levels of interest. However, he also felt hampered by the design limitations of the traditional exhibition format and the uneven effectiveness of the artifacts (in similar ways that Stott experienced the El Monte objects): “The crude neck yoke and wash board spoke volumes about the difficulties of carrying water and washing clothes, respectively, but the carpet sweeper and washing machine did not, by themselves, convey much about

technology's impact on cleaning."⁵⁴ In this instance, the idea behind the exhibition was stronger than some of the artifacts used to convey it. Peterson's essay on this experience is one of the few ways that small history museums share such lessons; major scholarly and professional journals also regularly publish reviews of exhibitions at smaller institutions, which allow them to be well-known among history museum professionals, but they may not get the widespread exposure that could draw additional visitors.

Exhibitions at history museums have been the most successful attempts to incorporate race, ethnicity, class, and gender into public history presentations. They are more likely than most historic sites or house museums to have academically trained historians on staff or as consultants who can help develop exhibit content and narrative structure.⁵⁵ The exhibition is a relatively flexible medium through which to make one's argument, although challenging from the writer's point of view given the necessity of writing for audiences that vary in age and education. Exhibitions also allow more institutional control over the museum's message since visitors can read the information themselves instead of having it conveyed to them by guides whose mastery of the material can be variable. The methods of displaying artifacts, however, can unintentionally undermine the intellectual content. Placed in Plexiglas cases under appropriate lighting and guarded by security, it is difficult avoid designating objects as somehow "ideal" or special regardless of what the interpretive labels say.

"Real" History

While history museums may (intentionally or unintentionally) indulge in ideal interpretations of historical people and things, they typically do not encounter challenges to the authenticity of their collections. Once an object is collected by a museum, it

generally takes on the status of being genuine and significant, with the occasional exception of forgeries.⁵⁶ Historic sites (individual structures or collections of historic buildings interpreted as a community), whose authenticity is often based on combinations of objects, structures, and geographical locations, have considerably more complicated relationships with authenticity. Since they are typically located where events of historical significance have taken place or where the landscape plays a key role in understanding them, historic site interpretation and claims of “authenticity” are to some degree “place-based.” However, like the Smithsonian, these sites have started to shed formalist interpretations of daily life (identifying things and demonstrating processes) in favor of the analytical approach (who used these things and why). In doing so, they are particularly mindful of how a broader approach to social history changes the interpretation of the site’s authenticity.

One category of historic sites, outdoor or “living history” museums that recreate life in villages or farms, are most vulnerable to challenges to their authenticity. These museums typically attempt to present multiple layers of genuineness through combinations of “real” people, things (structures and their contents) and places. Jay Anderson has described living history as “both didactic simulation and stimulation, a pedagogical tool that could enliven their programs and help visitors vicariously feel the past.”⁵⁷ These presentations can be in first person, in which the interpreter is costumed and assumes a historical persona, or third person, in which s/he may wear period dress but speaks in terms of the present. A historical village or settlement may use first-person interpretation only in specific places or according to a schedule, such as Colonial Williamsburg, or it can be used throughout the historic site, as at Plimoth Plantation.

The use of first-person interpretation often figures in the debate over the authenticity of living history museums. The most ardent supporters of this method see it as the most ideal and authentic way of teaching history, especially at sites that can immerse the visitor in the built environment and material culture of the past. According to Jack Larkin, Chief Historian at Old Sturbridge Village, a living history museum in Massachusetts,

We seek to portray the past realistically. We seek to portray it accurately. We seek to portray the past in some terms in its fullness. We seek, obviously, to portray not simply the history of dead white men, but a real inclusive history that deals with a wide range of social movements. And we seek to present it in an engaging way. In a concrete, experiential way. What we tend to focus on, and of course we're not a history of abstractions, but a history of ordinary experience.⁵⁸

Whether or not to use historical personas as part of a site's total reality is one of the most complex questions in the ongoing quest for authenticity because it involves many aspects of museum practice: connoisseurship, interpretation of "facts," presentation styles, and the fine line museums draw between education and entertainment.

Just as general history museums pride themselves on their position as home to "real" objects, promotion of historic sites relies heavily on providing visitors access to real things and places. Despite the presence of original artifacts and structures, such museums are constructed simulations, a status that these institutions use in some conflicting ways. Museum villages can be classified based on the use of "original" structures in their construction. The most common are sites that are fictional villages made up of original buildings, usually moved from many parts of the state or region, representing a "typical" settlement of the interpretive period(s), most often representing the pre-industrial era. Conner Prairie, a simulated pioneer settlement near Indianapolis,

Indiana, and Old World Wisconsin, a collection of ethnic settlements located outside of Milwaukee, are two well-known examples of this type. Plimoth Plantation is a unique site in that all structures and artifacts are reproductions and the interpreters become “living artifacts” by taking on specific personas and speaking in period dialect. Although the village does not contain any “original” materials, the experience is intended to be more “authentic” because Plimoth allows its collection to be used and experienced the way it would have been in the seventeenth century. Other reconstructed sites, often built on original architectural footings and with varying amounts of historical documentation, interpret without Plimoth’s full-immersion technique. Colonial Williamsburg is a hybrid site, which depicts an actual city by using a combination of original and reconstructed buildings.

Despite the constant efforts to make historic sites more authentic, ultimately they are only simulations. Diane Barthel defines recreations on original sites or generic historical communities as Staged Symbolic Communities (SSC), which she claims “serve as a symbolic function for the larger society. SSCs are symbolic insofar as they only play the *role* of community. They *perform* community in a society wherein organic communities are a thing of the past, if, indeed, they ever existed [emphasis in original].”⁵⁹ Unlike “real” communities, these historic sites do not progress forward in time aside from seasonal changes (Colonial Williamsburg’s approach is that every day is 1774) and they have specific physical boundaries for this “time.” In most cases, a large parking lot and/or visitor center serve as “Zones of Mediation” that highlight the transition between the modern and historical worlds.⁶⁰ Colonial Williamsburg has taken an interesting approach to suggesting a “time travel” experience in its zones of mediation. Visitors who

choose to walk from the modern visitor center (parts of which feel like an airport terminal) to the historic area encounter a series of plaques that indicate the societal changes between present and past [Figure B-63]. On the walk back, the plaques depict changes as the visitor moves forward in time.

These sites employ the experiential approach to teaching history; therefore, believability is key to convincing visitors that they have traveled back in time. In his analysis of Lincoln's New Salem, a living history site in Illinois and a self-described "authentic reproduction," anthropologist Edward Bruner introduced several definitions of authenticity as it applies to historic sites. The first is that such a reproduction is "credible and convincing." The goal of most museum professionals, this version of authenticity acknowledges that the site is believable in the eyes of modern people, that visitors are persuaded that the site is an accurate reproduction of the past. A second definition focuses on genuineness, or whether the reproduction would be believable to a person of the represented period.⁶¹ This type of realism is clearly more difficult to assess, but it does address the presence of anachronisms or the absence of features that would have been present, such as diseases, dirt, and the like. While this is the highest level of authenticity reproductions aspire to, it is nearly impossible to achieve, in part due to modern health codes, but also because not all details of the past are knowable.

Authenticity can also identify an object or place as "original" as opposed to a copy, in other words, the actual artifact used in the past.⁶² The presence of "original" objects is a major attraction for visitors, and authors of two early and respected handbooks for interpretation indicated the importance of authentic objects in telling a site's story. In his classic manual *Interpreting our Heritage*, Freeman Tilden defined

interpretation as “an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.”⁶³ William Alderson and Shirley Payne Low (the latter a former supervisor of hostess training at Colonial Williamsburg) claimed that in order to provide “well-crafted history” to their audiences, one duty of interpreters is to “display objects that are authentic, well-documented, and in good condition.”⁶⁴ Most guides are able to identify objects and places at the site as “original” and often privilege them during their tour (sometimes at the expense of the type of interpretation Tilden advocates), most likely to justify the site’s authenticity as “duly authorized, certified or legally valid.” At this point authenticity and authority merge, in that the site is “real” and has the authority to tell its story.⁶⁵ However, most sites rely on professional and local historians, who may have conflicting interpretations; thus the staff must decide which is to be the “official” interpretation, leaving themselves open for attacks on their authority.

In the 1990s, the Disney Corporation’s proposal to build a history-based theme park in Manasses, Virginia brought the believability definition to the forefront of discussions of historic site authenticity. Many historians charged that such a park would be a disgrace because it would not be authentic. Cary Carson, vice president for research for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, revealed that focus groups of people who had visited both Colonial Williamsburg and a Disney attraction identified *both* sites as “authentic” since Disney would be able to make history “completely believable.”⁶⁶ At New Salem, a site in which all of the buildings, costumes, etc. are reproductions, Bruner claims that while the 1990s version of the village satisfies what modern visitors expect to

find in the reconstructed 1830s village, it is not likely to be believable to a person of the period. He cites the following incongruities: the representation of the village as a series of individual residences rather than as a community; the lack of less-savory characters known as “roughnecks,” drinking and gambling pioneers known to have resided in New Salem; the visual focus of the museum as opposed to the oral culture of the early 1800s; the shift in the meaning of handicrafts from items of survival to nostalgia; and the emphasis on Abraham Lincoln’s presence in New Salem although he was not especially prominent during his brief stay.⁶⁷

Acknowledgement of the place’s authenticity also contributes to its believability. This argument privileges the site’s ability to tell its own story, in the same manner that material culture scholars listen to the ways objects “speak.” The “Disney’s America” controversy also highlighted the importance of place. One opponent of the project addressed the damage of a “real” historic place to create a “fake” one:

They were erecting what would be synthetic history in an area where history already existed in the form of these battlefields and precious, to me, historic sites. It was something irresponsibly vulgar, it seemed to me, to have this monumental theme park in a place where the theme was already laid out in some form of history itself, silent and ready to be absorbed by people who wanted to go there and contemplate *history in its original state* [emphasis mine].⁶⁸

Regarding this aspect of the authentic approach to American history, Disney’s executives admitted their lack of credibility, explaining, “Colonial Williamsburg has the same thing as the Smithsonian and the Manasses battlefield have: real history. We can do everything we want, but we can’t create that.”⁶⁹ One cannot move Civil War battlefields, for example.

In such cases, the authenticity of the place itself is essential, but historic sites that interpret life in “typical” villages are also popular and in some cases, well-respected by historians. These sites use traditional academic research techniques, and original and replicated buildings and artifacts in their attempt to tell stories that are representative of the everyday life of the region. This approach forces the site to generalize and conflate the diversity of experiences into one representation.

Conner Prairie, located just outside of Indianapolis, seems to have found success with the generalist approach to interpreting the daily life of pioneers in nineteenth-century Indiana. It is comprised of distinct historic areas: Liberty Corner, a rural crossroads settlement (circa 1880s); Prairietown (circa 1830s), a village comprised of historic buildings moved to Conner Prairie from all over the state; the Lenape Indian Camp and McKinnen’s Trading Post represent the statehood year 1816 and the occasionally stormy relationship between Native Americans and white settlers; and the William Conner Estate (the only “original” building at the museum and home of an actual person), believed to be the first brick home in central Indiana and the cornerstone of the museum (1820s). The PastPort Discovery area, a hands-on learning zone for families, and a modern visitor center with interpretive exhibits and dining facilities complement the historic areas.⁷⁰

Conner Prairie’s web site emphasizes the importance of research and its dedication to telling the stories of diverse peoples: “Conner Prairie staff members strive to accurately research and interpret the past and to create public programs that bring nineteenth-century events and situations into clear focus for visitors.”⁷¹ The staff has written a “history” of the fictional village Prairietown that establishes the context for the

settlement and biographies of its fictional residents. The introduction to this history addresses some of the necessary concessions to authenticity:

The model village has been assembled for the purpose of interpreting the life and times of the first generation of settlers. To that end we have distorted reality where it seemed appropriate to make a point, to emphasize a quality or call attention to a contrast.

By design, we have not copied any one village exactly or bound our program to rigid formulas resulting from local historical realities or statistical evidence. At the same time, we are committed to representing a community that is accurate on the whole, which preserves something of the contextual balance of ingredients found in actual historical examples. Intentional deviations from the dictates of evidence are justified by instructional purpose, not mere convenience, and they are measured against the accuracy of the whole message conveyed by the village program. In all models accuracy in details sometimes contributes and sometimes competes with authenticity in the assemblage; we have struck a balance that changes according to the needs of our visitors, the talents of our interpreters and the conditions under which we engage in teaching history to the public.⁷²

In making this statement regarding the methods of constructing Prairietown, the staff suggests a difference between accuracy and authenticity, whereas many other sites seem to conflate the two terms. The story of Prairietown begins with the claim that a site can be historically accurate, but not necessarily completely authentic.

Conner Prairie has also pioneered some ambitious special programming involving living history, most notably "Follow the North Star," in which visitors play the roles of runaway slaves traveling north via the Underground Railroad. Inaugurated in November 1998, this program was created to energize the interpretation of African American history at the site. Having spent several years celebrating Black History Month with a series consisting primarily of character interpretations of influential African Americans, Conner Prairie staff looked for new and more potent ways to interpret black history. The result was this new ninety-minute experience-based program.⁷³ Developing "Follow the North Star" required collaboration with advisory boards that included local scholars and African

American educators and museum professionals. Extensive training for participating interpreters and trial runs of the program helped the staff work some of the bugs out before its inaugural performance. Participants experiencing discomfort during the program were able to step out of their roles by tying a piece of white cloth around their arm, indicating to the interpreters that their characters were “invisible.” A debriefing session at the close of the program allowed visitors to talk about their experience and ask questions.⁷⁴

Visitors and staff had intense emotional reactions to the program. Some visitors lingered to talk to staff and other participants; others sat in silence. Interpreters had to learn atypical ways of interacting with visitors: “During training, one interpreter asked that a session focus on ‘teaching us to be mean,’ while another found it difficult, if not impossible, to look a visitor in the eye and call him a ‘boy,’ or ‘buck.’”⁷⁵

This program requires a re-evaluation of the concept of “authenticity” as it relates to historic sites. The characters portrayed in the program were all fictional, but based on historical research. Information about the Underground Railroad, currently a hot topic among public history scholars and the subject of a recently opened museum in Ohio, is rare and often unreliable, and requires historians to make educated guesses. Conner Prairie’s program takes place in a fictional town made of original buildings. Thus, the question remains whether a site and program based so heavily on generalities can convey an “accurate” interpretation of the Underground Railroad. At least one scholar has voiced his skepticism: “An advertisement for ‘Follow the North Star Night’ at Conner Prairie dares potential customers to ‘Step into the shoes of a runaway slave. Experience

freedom's edge as you role play history in the extreme.' How is slavery remembered here? As if the life of a runaway slave were reducible to an evening of method acting!"⁷⁶

Living history museums and farms have contributed valuable interpretation of rural people who had been overlooked by history museums for decades. They have provided fertile grounds for experimenting with interpretive methods that require interaction with historical artifacts and with visitors. However, with the exception of programs like Conner Prairie's "Follow the North Star," living history museums have a tendency to make rural life look like simple and idyllic. Michael Wallace has remarked,

Our living history farms might profitably concentrate a bit less on sowing and reaping and a bit more on those developments—tenantry, migrant labor, foreclosures, agrarian movements, commodity exchanges, and world markets—that help explain how the old farms, whose values they celebrate, succumbed to the corporate agri-businesses that dominate American agriculture and account for much of the damage done to the countryside.⁷⁷

When living history interpreters stress the difficulty of rural lives, the results are typically narratives of progress, which makes visitors glad to live in the present day, as opposed to interpreting what these struggles meant in their historical context. Presenting pre-industrial or rural history with only two messages, that some things were good and some were bad, does no justice to the complexity of the period or society under investigation.

The authenticity of living history interpretations is also diminished by the paucity of sites that interpret urban or industrial history using experiential techniques. The National Park Service's Lowell National Historic Park is the best example of an American site that attempts to interpret social and cultural history of nineteenth-century industrial labor. Visitors may tour the mill and learn about boardinghouse life in "The Working People Exhibit," which invites visitors to

Explore the kitchen, dining room, and bedrooms of a reconstructed corporation boarding house furnished in the style of the 1850s. Listen to conversations of 19th-century women whose experiences are brought to life by an audio program. Enter the social and cultural worlds of Lowell's diverse ethnic groups, dating from the first Irish laborers in the 1820s to recent Southeast Asian émigrés.⁷⁸

Through this tour and an interpretive brochure about "The Acre," an early ethnic neighborhood still in existence that has reflected the trends of immigration throughout its long history, the staff at the Lowell NHP makes the labor and immigration issues of the past relevant to those of today.

The lack of emotional distance from industrial history may contribute to the dearth of labor history sites. A survey of tourists at the new National Museum of Industrial History in downtown Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, asked what they wanted from visits to museums and historic sites. Colonial history was clearly favored over other periods and heavy industrial sites were the least preferred. Catherine M. Cameron and John B. Gatewood, administrators of the survey, concluded that "such sites suffer from a recency effect: the operational industry is well within people's memory. It may be difficult to be sentimental or nostalgic for the work or occupational culture barely gone or even, in some cases, still in operation. Indeed the locals may feel bitterness and anger about the demise of the industry."⁷⁹ Interpreting labor history sites may be even more difficult in the current economic climate plagued by almost daily reports of the outsourcing of manufacturing jobs to countries with cheaper labor. If living history is to embrace industrial sites, sites will have to make hard decisions about how "authentic" these interpretations should be, given that factory workers have often performed physically oppressive labor under grim conditions. Like pre-industrial sites that interpret

slavery, they will have to negotiate the depiction of laborers as both victims and survivors of struggle and conflict.

Colonial Williamsburg: The Model and the Exception

As the *Enola Gay* case illustrated, interpretations of objects and events change over time as new information is uncovered or as old materials are seen from new perspectives. This constructionist theory has become a significant part of Colonial Williamsburg's interpretation of its own history and a way of explaining why the site has been "remade" physically and intellectually several times over the past seventy years. This approach worked with and against the staff's high standards of authenticity in all aspects of the site. As a case study of living history sites, Colonial Williamsburg's struggle with authenticity illustrates the difficulty of presenting social history at a site that is hampered and helped by its size and complexity. Colonial Williamsburg staff members muddle their message by reminding visitors that they don't tell anything that is not documented while pointing out that history is an interpretation.

Williamsburg served as the colonial capital of Virginia between 1699 and 1780 and is home to the nation's second oldest institution of higher learning, the College of William and Mary, founded in 1693. In terms of population, by 1750 Virginia was the largest of the colonies and more than 40 percent of its 230,000 residents were enslaved. The population of enslaved Africans was higher in Williamsburg, 52 percent. After the capital moved to Richmond, Williamsburg slowly declined. Although some of the original buildings remained, others were razed, and new buildings of modern architectural styles were built, making the city an architectural hodgepodge. Over time, the former capital bore little resemblance to the town in its colonial heyday.

Williamsburg's deterioration prompted Reverend W. A. R. Goodwin of the city's Brunton Parish Church to pursue restoration. In the 1920s, he enlisted John D. Rockefeller, Jr., a man with the money and enthusiasm to restore Williamsburg to its previous glory.

Since the first buildings opened to the public in 1934, the foundation that operates the site has kept it dynamic by adapting its stories to fit changes in the national mood and the interests of its visitors, while maintaining its commitment to historical accuracy. The result is an institution that is a kind of cultural chameleon. In recent years, Colonial Williamsburg staff members have been outspoken about their commitment to social history and the interpretation of people of all colors and social backgrounds. Despite this, they are met with regular criticism by academics and museum colleagues who think they don't go far enough. For example, in the final chapter of their study *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*, Richard Handler and Eric Gable sum up their findings in the following sentence: "The Colonial Williamsburg we discovered in the field continued to be a place that downplayed class conflict, denigrated those who complained about their lot, and celebrated upscale commercialism, linking the latter to enduring ideas of American virtue as if prosperity were a kind of grace, a sign and reward of the virtuous."⁸⁰ Handler and Gable's analysis of the site's near obsession with authenticity and credibility reveal some of the staff's problems with creating consistent and credible interpretations of the enslaved Africans, poor whites, women, and the "middling sorts" that they claim to offer.

Like history museums, Colonial Williamsburg takes pride in the authenticity of its collection: eighty-eight "original" buildings and several that have been carefully

reconstructed. The objects within the buildings are important too, but the way the site is described in both popular and scholarly writing, and the feeling one gets during an actual visit, the most powerful authenticity is located in the place itself. In terms of the physical site, even manure is considered a mark of the "real" capable of distinguishing the museum complex from its Disney counterparts, at least according to an article in a Sunday travel section that printed a headline exclaiming "Authenticity: Colonial Williamsburg Strives For That 18th Century Atmosphere, Right Down to the Road Apples." Allowing paint to peel on some of the buildings was also permitted to create a patina of realism. Handler and Gable saw this "aging" of the site as symbolic of the new approach to history: "In short, the past that the new social history introduced into the museum was to be a dirtier past, both literally and metaphorically."⁸¹

Besides the recent addition of "dirt" to the physical site, the foundation takes particular pride in the accurate restoration and reconstruction of exhibition buildings, and interpreters tend to emphasize the authenticity of the site as they interact with visitors. Perhaps the most extensive tribute to accuracy in Colonial Williamsburg's history was the reinterpretation of the Governor's Palace between 1975 and 1981. When it opened in the 1930s, the reconstructed palace featured interiors more in line with the Colonial Revival style, which was enjoying popularity due to the bicentennial of George Washington's birth. The curators in charge of the reinterpretation relied on an inventory of 16,500 objects taken at the death of colonial governor Norborne Berkeley, Baron de Botetourt in 1770. Colonial Williamsburg staff members tout the palace as exemplary of their dedication to authenticity, yet conjectural aspects of the reinterpretation are downplayed. Although the inventory supplies a list of artifacts that were present in the

palace, some could not be precisely identified, and it does not identify their placement in the rooms or wallpaper designs and other fixtures.⁸² Like most period restorations, the Governor's Palace presents its authenticity as being believable to a person from the period, despite the fact that the inventory represents an incomplete picture of life in 1774.

Handler and Gable noticed that interpreters used even minor details as examples of the site's commitment to accuracy. They cite an instance in which a visitor inquired about ceramic bottles mounted on many of the buildings. The interpreter identified them as "bird bottles," which encouraged birds to nest near the buildings to control insects. In addition to using this educational tidbit to plug the replicas sold in Colonial Williamsburg gift shops, the guide used it to demonstrate that "Colonial Williamsburg was a 'great big educational institution. We're always learning new things.'"⁸³ Handler and Gable found that guides often stressed both the site's authenticity and the ongoing process of learning and revising.

The fact that Colonial Williamsburg can never be completely accurate seems to have an impact on interpreters. The anthropologists noticed a proactive approach to defuse potential criticisms by pointing out the Foundation's previous mistakes and how it resolved them.⁸⁴ Colonial Williamsburg interpreters, and indeed interpreters at any historic site, live in fear of the "magpie": "someone who collects, indeed is obsessed with, a certain category of obscure historical facts." Handler and Gable relate the story of an architectural historian who was approached by a visitor who informed him that the padlocks on the reconstructed buildings were not of genuine eighteenth-century design. The historian spent at least one day researching padlocks, and finding that the visitor was correct, wrote to thank him for his observation and to ensure him that modifications

would be made gradually.⁸⁵ While historic site staffs tend to be thankful to visitors who point out inconsistencies, these encounters can be embarrassing for the guide, especially if the visitor makes an issue of their discovery during the tour. At a site like Colonial Williamsburg where authenticity is continually presented as ideal, wearing what Handler and Gable call “credibility armor” is understandable.

There are numerous other examples of the interpreters’ defense of the site’s authenticity, such as citing rules that govern the appearance of historic buildings used as residences, and pointing out some of the deliberate artifice that is created for visitor comfort, such as trash cans and drinking fountains disguised as barrels (an ironic act, given that such disguises are meant to keep visitors from being distracted by anachronisms). This focus on the physical authenticity has the potential to overshadow the people who lived there, particularly enslaved Africans, who have only recently become part of Colonial Williamsburg’s portrait of daily life. In their pursuit of creating the ultimate “reality,” staff members end up emphasizing an idealized colonial city, one with everything in its place.

Despite the importance of the buildings and artifacts, the stories that the Colonial Williamsburg staff tells about the city’s people and their society are what bring the site to “life.” Physical restoration projects have been ongoing at the site, but adjustments to what I consider its “intellectual authenticity” have made the most progress since staff made a commitment to presenting social history. For many years, Colonial Williamsburg’s message reflected the current societal values and needs. During the Depression, visitors made connections between their difficulties with those of colonists and concluded that people were better off in the present despite the difficult financial

climate.⁸⁶ The Foundation invited soldiers and sailors from nearby military bases to visit Colonial Williamsburg during World War II to offset low attendance numbers that resulted from rationing. Americans looked to the site for comfort during the war, and it reminded soldiers “this is what we are fighting for.”⁸⁷

Colonial Williamsburg achieved greater national visibility during the 1950s because of new efforts to celebrate patriotism and democracy in the shadow of the Cold War. The intensity of the site’s message is best exemplified by John D. Rockefeller III’s ideal of international dynamic Americanism, which used the restoration to “help fashion a political climate instead of merely representing one.” Rockefeller sent the Special Survey Committee overseas to study the appeal of communism in order to find new ways to promote democracy; the resulting anti-communist message became part of all aspects of Colonial Williamsburg’s presentation.⁸⁸ In 1956, the orientation film *Williamsburg: The Story of a Patriot* made its debut; this patriotic dramatization of revolutionary fervor is still screened at the Visitor Center today, despite being out of step with the social history the Foundation claims as their present objective.

Although some members of management had shown interest in recreating slave cabins and interpreting the stories of ordinary people early in the site’s history, such changes did not occur until the end of the 1970s after growing instances of criticism and competition.⁸⁹ By 1975, critics began comparing Williamsburg with Disney theme parks, describing it as a bland, oversanitized corporate entity focused primarily on entertainment. Other living history sites that had already introduced diversity into their interpretation created serious competition.⁹⁰ Perhaps most significantly, visitors found the interpretation lacking in authenticity. One visitor wrote to President Edward

Alexander regarding the absence of “the more seamy and unattractive facets of life in Williamsburg during the period depicted” and the “other-side-of-the-track Williamsburg.”⁹¹ African Americans also had a very minimal presence at the site both as visitors (Colonial Williamsburg was desegregated in 1950) and in the interpretation, which was pointed out by another visitor’s letter: “Nowhere was there any discussion about the cultural borrowing from African tribal life and customs. . . . The contributions of the black population have been largely omitted. . . . [A]ny questions asked about [the African] aspect of the life are met by the hostess by obvious discomfort and embarrassment.”⁹² To respond to these challenges, the Foundation hired young scholars affected by the weak academic job market to improve the historical accuracy of Colonial Williamsburg’s interpretation.

Colonial Williamsburg hired its first African American character interpreters in 1979, after which the site began offering a variety of programs and tours highlighting its black history. Creation of the African American Interpretive Programs (AAIP) department provided a specialized staff that developed programs and tours based on sound social history scholarship. The “Other Half Tour” is the best-known of Colonial Williamsburg’s African American history programs, and is the most consistently offered. The title refers to the fact that 52 percent of Williamsburg’s population was black, a fact uncovered by Thad Tate’s 1957 research report, “The Negro in Eighteenth Century Williamsburg.”⁹³ New scholarship, staff historians and interpreters have altered the program over the years, including the length of the tour, which started at two hours, at some point reduced to one and half hours, and is currently one hour (offered daily at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.).

Four main topics were at the heart of the original "Other Half Tour": the middle passage, country and town living conditions, religion, and music.⁹⁴ Handler and Gable have used the tour to illustrate how the concept of authenticity is used differently by white and black interpreters. During the anthropologists' fieldwork, guides for the Other Half Tour used the George Wythe house as the backdrop for a discussion of miscegenation. Standing outside of the house, they discussed the possibility that Wythe had a child named Michael Brown by his slave mistress Lydia Broadnax. Some AAIP staff told visitors that they were the only ones at the site telling the "real story."⁹⁵ White interpreters working inside the house would not discuss this relationship and explained that "while some visitors might find the issue 'touchy' or 'embarrassing,' they themselves would be willing to broach it only if they had the facts to back them up."⁹⁶ Handler and Gable found that white interpreters regularly distinguished between "fact" and "conjecture," the former used to discuss white inhabitants, the latter to interpret black residents. Even when documents provide "facts" about Williamsburg's black population, such as an inventory of Peyton Randolph's estate, this information is presented one-dimensionally by focusing on the slaves' names and their monetary value.⁹⁷ Hence, interpreters take pride in the authenticity that an inventory provided for the reinterpretation of the Governor's Palace, and downplay the heavy influence of conjecture on the final product, and do virtually the opposite when talking about Williamsburg's black population, emphasizing that so much of what is known is conjecture and downplaying the "facts" that are known.

Other curious policies have emerged in the name of authenticity. One of the many craft interpreters, a cooper, described how the foundation promoted a "deskilling"

of these apprentices to make their products more “accurate.” In the cooper’s case, he now had to supply wood to make his barrels, and thus spent a greater amount of his time preparing raw materials and less time practicing his craft. He complained to management, who addressed the issue in terms of historical accuracy: ““They explained that a master cooper like me—trained in London, able to make the finest barrels—simply would not exist out here on the frontier. So that it would not be appropriate to train apprentices to my level.””⁹⁸ Thus, the management preferred a less-skilled cooper whose barrels would be more authentic than a real master craftsman.

These are just a few of the many examples of how Handler and Gable suggest that Colonial Williamsburg wants to hold itself up as the paragon of authenticity, but also use it as a shield to avoid the unpleasantness that social history often brings to museums. Since their fieldwork concluded in 1993, Colonial Williamsburg staff members have continued to see effective ways to pursue authenticity and social history. A reenactment of an estate sale in which slaves were to be auctioned raised the question of whether something that “authentic” was appropriate for the site [Figure B-64]. Jack Gravely of the NAACP introduced this argument claiming, “This [Colonial Williamsburg] is not a museum!”⁹⁹ Other critics argued that Colonial Williamsburg was not a proper setting, that the event would heighten racial discord, and that it was lacking in empowering African American figures. The most extreme criticism compared the event to reenacting a rape or the Holocaust.¹⁰⁰ The Colonial Williamsburg administration gave the program its full support regardless of donor threats to pull funding. The program has not been staged since its debut, not due to the controversy, but because of its impact on the interpreters. Christy Matthews, a participant in the slave auction program, has described

“the reactions of the spectators and public, both positive and negative, as ‘epiphanous moments,’ which were also intense for the white interpreters putting on the auction. The participants were taken aback by emotional responses and by their own emotions.”¹⁰¹

Having read so many descriptions and critiques of Colonial Williamsburg, one feels compelled to see the place for oneself to truly experience its complexity. My husband and I took the opportunity to visit the site in March 2003. This was my first personal encounter with Colonial Williamsburg, so although I had read a great deal about it, I tried to experience it from a variety of perspectives: as a scholar, a museum professional, and as a visitor. My own visit complicated my view of the site further; it seemed to me that the critics and defenders were both “right” about its deficiencies and strengths. Because the site is so large and intricate, individuals can easily tailor their visit to their specific interests, thus Colonial Williamsburg can be almost anything the visitor wants it to be, a comment I later found to have been made by a member of one of the foundation’s focus groups. The variety of interpretive methods we witnessed during our visit also reflected various applications of authenticity.

Our visit to Colonial Williamsburg was short but intense. We arrived mid-morning and after being offered a bewildering array of choices at the ticket counter we made our way to the historic area. We had lunch at the Shields Tavern (to get the full Williamsburg experience at a slightly lower price than dinner) and spent the rest of the afternoon visiting the various buildings and getting physically oriented. We were at the site from opening until closing the next day and came back for an evening program. Since our time was limited (likely the case for most visitors), we focused on the buildings and events that sounded most interesting. We attended every program about African

American history and got a broad sampling of the different methods of interpretation that are used to depict the experiences of enslaved Africans.

The Other Half Tour ended up being more of a walking lecture than a use of historic buildings and artifacts to interpret the African American experience, but the guide's knowledge was impressive. This program highlights the real stories of real people using a scholarly approach. It was an idea-based interpretation and drew its authority from the research conducted by Colonial Williamsburg's experienced staff of historians. The guide described how they found some of these stories, but it seemed less like putting up "credibility armor" and more like a historian describing his/her methodology. Our guide was white (the group was nearly all white), but unlike white interpreters described by Handler and Gable, she spoke frankly about miscegenation, the various laws enacted to control it, and the rape of slaves by their masters. She also addressed the differences between the lives of enslaved Africans, poor whites, and free blacks in terms of the varying levels of freedom accorded to each. The tour was to last one hour, but several members of the group stayed to ask additional questions and overall the group's interest level was high. One visitor asked the guide if she had any insight into why there weren't many black visitors at the site. From her perspective, marketing was not appropriately addressing this audience and that current promotional material did not include African Americans as audience members or interpreters. While I think this is a good point, it likely is only part of the problem. Given that the "Patriot's Pass," which grants the highest level of access to the site cost fifty dollars per adult at the time of our visit, the expense of visiting is likely a contributor to the mostly white, upper-middle-class visitor profile.¹⁰²

Later that afternoon, we watched some of the African American character interpreters in action during a program entitled "Among the Dipping Gourds" [Figures B-65 and B-66]. This event took place in the yard behind one of the historic buildings and was an improvised discussion between free and enslaved members of Colonial Williamsburg's black community. It was not made clear whether these characters were based on actual people or were composite characters based on general information. The authenticity was located in the visitor's experience of the program; particularly if they encounter this group of interpreters after exiting the Brush-Everard House where a third-person interpreter has talked more about the objects than the people who lived there. Visitors were invited to eavesdrop on their conversations, which covered a variety of issues: watching one's wife and child sold on the auction block, the problems with running away, lack of white recognition of the Baptist church, and the differences between free and enslaved blacks. They did make one reference to miscegenation, namely about how mulatto children have much harder lives because the master's wife knows where they came from and makes their lives worse. Audience members could come and go as they wished and many stayed for a long time. During the first hour we sat in on the event, almost no one left the presentation. The interpreters did attempt to interact with the audience, but were for the most part unsuccessful in getting them to respond. Visitors seemed to prefer quietly watching, perhaps not knowing what to say or ask.

Our final experience with African American history at Colonial Williamsburg involved a performance called "Papa Said, Mama Said," an evening program that took place in the restored capitol. The actors, one portraying a male slave, the other one

female, described the event as “a program about life through storytelling” that showed how slaves came to America emptyhanded but not emptyheaded. The presentation consisted of a series of African folktales told by the two actors, who chose audience members (including me) to act out the stories. The focus of this program was the authentic stories, a reminder to the audience that culture can be preserved in forms other than material objects. It was a well-presented and enjoyable piece to which the audience reacted very enthusiastically. Between stories the actors talked about some of the difficult aspects of their lives, working in the tobacco fields and their intolerant masters, but the real emphasis was on the fact that slaves continued to pass down the stories of their ancestors and despite their condition of servitude, they were strengthened by their culture and traditions.

Most of these presentations of African American history focused on authenticity located outside of material objects. The Other Half Tour was based on the study of real documents and archaeological evidence, but neither were presented to the group to study first-hand. In the “Dipping Gourds” program, the character interpreters became living artifacts, although there was no third-person framing to identify the authenticity of the characters. “Papa Said, Mama Said” highlighted the authenticity of oral traditions and storytelling.

These three experiences appealed to different parts of my role at the site. The Other Half tour satisfied my interests as a scholar, and I found myself wishing it were longer. The “Dipping Gourds” program was interesting from the perspective of a museum scholar with limited experience but great interest in first-person interpretation. “Papa Said Mama Said” appealed to my visitor-side, who after a long day of walking and

listening to tours, appreciated some intelligent entertainment. Given our limited time and selection of activities, we were able to absorb a great deal of the site's African-American history, with the added benefit of experiencing it through several interpretive techniques. However, I did notice that the African-American programs requiring a ticket (Other Half Tour and "Papa Said, Mama Said") seemed to be less popular among visitors in general. When we purchased our Patriot's Passes and tickets to special performances, we learned that many programs sold out quickly. We had arrived mid-morning on a Friday in March, and found that the evening's performance of "Cry Witch" and the popular ghost tours were already sold out both nights of our visit. However, we had no trouble getting tickets for "Papa Said, Mama Said," and while this performance was well-attended, a number of empty seats suggested that it had not sold out. The same was true of the Other Half Tour we attended. Tickets were required to ensure one's place, but the tour had not been filled, so visitors without tickets were able to join. Although both of these programs were excellent in content and presentation, they did not seem to have the same demand as others. For most visitors, the experience of Colonial Williamsburg lacked the breadth of the "real" world of the colonial capital. One could make the same argument, however, about our visit, which focused on everyone *but* the "silk pants patriots."

Conclusions

Defining anything as "typical" in the museum world is next to impossible. As the above examples illustrate, institutions with large budgets, visitation, and research staffs have the most potential to broaden their view of social history and do an excellent job interpreting it. Having the resources to engage a top-notch research staff makes a significant impact on a museum's ability to move beyond a formalist installation of

collections and to an analytical one that can better address their social and cultural relevance. The Smithsonian has the personnel, collections, and archival resources to mount such groundbreaking exhibitions like “Field to Factory,” “A More Perfect Union,” and “Between a Rock and a Hard Place.” The cancellation of the *Enola Gay* exhibit and the furor over “The West As America” did reveal that even large institutions are vulnerable to full-scale attacks, but the Smithsonian is not a “typical” museum. It does not charge admission and receives the vast majority of its operating budget from federal appropriations. Thus, it is hindered by its position as a national museum that should be “objective” in its exhibitions, liable to attacks that rail Congress about what the taxpayers of America are funding. Smaller museums, while freer of the national scrutiny the Smithsonian must endure, also have to worry about where the money will come from. Controversial exhibitions have the potential to alienate visitors and donors, but they also can draw more of both. Consider the incredible success of “Without Sanctuary.” Visitors do vote with their feet, and often they choose exhibitions that challenge them and their beliefs.

All history museums and historic sites have the ability to participate in ambitious interpretation by creatively using publications, both printed and virtual. Art museums are the best example to follow in the use of books or catalogues to complement their exhibitions. These publications typically include essays by prominent scholars of the specific subject matter, excellent reproductions of the paintings, sculpture, and other objects, and detailed lists of the pieces included in the exhibition.¹⁰³ Had the catalogue that was to accompany the *Enola Gay* exhibition been published, the curators would have had the chance to present the issues that proved too contentious for label text. Colonial

Williamsburg has published its more recently revised curriculum, *Becoming Americans: Our Struggle to be Both Free and Equal*, which provides excellent insight into several aspects of its history, particularly a chapter entitled “Enslaving Virginia.” While admitting the presence of the inevitable scholarly and narrative shortcomings, historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (and author of the remarkable study, *A Midwife’s Tale*) commented in her review, “Readers who think of Colonial Williamsburg as patriotism in knee breeches or a set of paint colors at the local hardware store will indeed be surprised by this book.”¹⁰⁴ Even though its original audience was interpreters and educators, making the book available to the general public further expands the reach of the site’s interpretive goals.

Visitors are attracted to history museums and historic sites because they offer the opportunity to interact with “real” things from the past. Museums unintentionally mislead some of their visitors to believe that their sites can actually provide “reality,” despite their commitment to authenticity. The cases of the *Enola Gay* and Colonial Williamsburg illustrate that real objects can overpower the stories of the diverse people associated with them. By concentrating the visitor’s attention on the object in and of itself, the curator or interpreter can neutralize or downplay the political connotations of its display or preservation. What are defended as well-meaning attempts at objective interpretation strip the object of the complexity that can be used to build a truly “balanced” interpretation from multiple perspectives.

Historic house museum staff face similar conflicts of real and ideal in their interpretations. Like those at living history sites, their staffs are proud to teach history through real things and places. However, the tendency to focus on the importance of the

house's owner and their material culture threatens to diminish the interpretation of all its residents, but particularly those whose stories are just now being told.

Notes

¹ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 49.

² Hal K. Rothman, "Museums and Academics: Thoughts Toward an Ethic of Cooperation," *Journal of American Culture* 12 (Summer 1989): 37-38.

³ AAM also requires that the institution "Be a legally organized not-for-profit institution or part of a not-for-profit or government entity. Be essentially educational in nature. Have a formally stated mission. Have one full-time paid professional staff who has museum knowledge and experience and allocated financial resources sufficient to operate the museum effectively. Have a formal and appropriate program of presentation and maintenance of exhibits. American Association of Museums, "Information Center Fact Sheet—What Is A Museum?" <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/reference_library/1whatis.cfm> (29 March 2004).

⁴ David Carr, *The Promise of Cultural Institutions* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003), xviii.

⁵ Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 21-22, 32.

⁶ Michael J. Ettema, "History Museums and the Culture of Materialism," in *Past Meets Present: Essays about Historic Interpretation and Public Audiences*, ed. Jo Blatti (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press), 63.

⁷ Ettema, 65-69.

⁸ Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no.1 (Spring 1982): 1.

⁹ Prown, 3.

¹⁰ Gary Kulik, "Designing the Past: History-Museum Exhibitions from Peale to the Present," in *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 4.

¹¹ Ettema, 74-77.

¹² Spencer R. Crew and James E. Sims, "Locating Authenticity: Fragments of a Dialogue," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Stephen D. Lavine (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 159.

- ¹³ Crew and Sims, 163.
- ¹⁴ Other staff members had similar reactions to the Zyklon-B canisters, seeing them as symbols of evil. Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Viking, 1995), 162; 157-158.
- ¹⁵ Ettema, 77.
- ¹⁶ These include Philip Nobile, ed., *Judgment at the Smithsonian* (New York: Marlowe & Company, 1995); Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Englehardt, ed., *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996). Essays on the exhibition are included in Michael Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*; Timothy W. Luke, *Museum Politics: Power Plays at the Exhibition* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).
- ¹⁷ Philip Nobile, "On the Steps of the Smithsonian: Hiroshima Denial in America's Attic," in *Judgment at the Smithsonian*, ed. Philip Nobile (New York: Marlowe & Company, 1995), xxviii.
- ¹⁸ Martin Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied: Lobbying the History of the Enola Gay* (New York: Copernicus, 1996), 212.
- ¹⁹ Harwit, 214-215.
- ²⁰ Harwit, 215.
- ²¹ Timothy W. Luke, *Museum Politics: Power Plays at the Exhibition* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 24.
- ²² Steven C. Dubin, *Displays of Power: Memory and Amnesia in the American Museum* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1999), 219.
- ²³ Quoted in Richard Kohn, "History and the Culture Wars: The Case of the Smithsonian Institution's Enola Gay Exhibition," *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 3 (December 1995): 1054.
- ²⁴ "Excerpts from Hearings of the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration: Sen. Ted Stevens, Maj. Gen. Charles W. Sweeny, Sen. Wendell Ford, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Dr. Edward T. Linenthal," *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 3 (December 1995): 1142.
- ²⁵ Michael Baxandall, "Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 34.

- ²⁶ Duncan Cameron, "The Museum, a Temple or the Forum," in *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift*, ed. Gail Anderson (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004) 69; the essay originally appeared in the *Journal of World History* 14, no. 1 (1972), 197-210.
- ²⁷ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1998), 138.
- ²⁸ Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).
- ²⁹ John Kuo Wei Tchen, "Creating a Dialogic Museum: The Chinatown History Museum Experiment" in *Museums and Communities*, ed. Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer, and Stephen D. Lavine (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 291-293. Formerly found only in major cities, ethnic museums in smaller cities serve the same functions. The National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa serves as a connection to the Czech heritage of many of the working and middle-class people whose families worked in the industries that built the city, in addition to being a national museum for Czechs and Slovaks across the country.
- ³⁰ Jeffrey C. Stewart and Fath Davis Ruffins, "A Faithful Witness: Afro-American Public History in Historical Perspective, 1828-1984," in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, ed. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 331-332.
- ³¹ Paul Ruffins, "Embracing Public History: the Increasing Number of Black History Museums Provides an Alternative to the 'Publish or Perish' Environment of Academia," *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 14 February 2002, <http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/m0DXK/26_18/83663836/print.jhtml> (17 February 2004).
- ³² Jacqueline Trescott, "African American Museum Bill Clears Senate," *Washington Post*, 21 November 2003, C01.
- ³³ Paul Ruffins, np.
- ³⁴ Crew and Sims in *Exhibiting Cultures*, 173.
- ³⁵ Daryl White, "Museum and Exhibit Reviews: 'Without Sanctuary,'" *The Public Historian* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 124; Dora Apel, "On Looking: Lynching Photographs and Legacies of Lynching after 9/11," *American Quarterly* 55, no. 3. (September 2003): 463.
- ³⁶ Apel, 462-463.

³⁷ "Without Sanctuary," <<http://www.journale.com/withoutsanctuary/>> (11 December 2003). "Without Sanctuary" is no longer available for on-line viewing, <www.musarium.com/withoutsanctuary/main.html> (1 September 2004).

³⁸ Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, "A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the U. S. Constitution," "Overview," <<http://americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/non-flash/overview>> (26 November 2003).

³⁹ Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, "A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the U. S.," "Justice: Japanese Americans Today," Constitution, <http://americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/non-flash/justice_today.html> (26 November 2003).

⁴⁰ <<http://americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion>>

⁴¹ "Smithsonian Sweatshop Exhibit: Another *Enola Gay*?" *Academe*, November-December 1997, 8-9.

⁴² Peter Liebhold, "Experiences from the Front Line: Presenting a Controversial Exhibition during the Culture Wars," *Public Historian* 22 no. 3 (Summer 2000): 83.

⁴³ Liebhold, 71.

⁴⁴ Other curators have experimented with partial or total abandonment of the institutional or curatorial voice with similar goals in mind. In "Perspectives: Angles on African Art," ten co-curators with connections to African art (although only two were academically trained specialists on the subject) wrote and signed the labels, which provided a diverse collection of interpretations and personal opinions that encouraged the visitors to agree or disagree with their comments. Susan Vogel, "Always True to the Object, in Our Fashion," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Stephen D. Levine (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 193-194.

⁴⁵ Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, "Between A Rock and A Hard Place," "El Monte Letters," <<http://americanhistory.si.edu/sweatshops/elmonte/3t6.htm>> (7 December 2003).

⁴⁶ Liebhold, 76-77.

⁴⁷ Mary Alexander, "Do Visitors Get It? A Sweatshop Exhibit and Visitors' Comments," *Public Historian* 22, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 87-90.

⁴⁸ Liebhold, 79.

⁴⁹ Richard Stott, Review of "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: A History of American Sweatshops, 1820-Present" *The Journal of American History* 86, no.1 (June 1999): 189.

⁵⁰ Stott, 190.

⁵¹ In his review of "The Working People of Richmond: Life and Labor in an Industrial City," at the Richmond, Virginia's Valentine Museum, Randall Miller also found the display of machinery lacking in effectiveness, in that it "isolates the machinery and contrives factory environments more sterile and ordered than real factories ever were, or could be. By showing only one machine—rather than a line of machines as would be characteristic of most factory settings—to represent each process, the industrial exhibit shifts the focus from the workers to the machine, like of work of sculpture, beautiful, approachable, and in the end, subject to human hands alone. The dust-free, uncluttered floors, well-lit rooms, and climate-controlled air of the modern exhibit area can create an anachronistic setting more suitable to making computer chips than boiler plate. Nowhere do the din, grime, darkness, stale air, and stench of the nineteenth-century factories intrude—be it at the otherwise excellent Lowell mills exhibit or the current Valentine one." "Exhibit Review: "The Working People of Richmond: Life and Labor in an Industrial City" *The Public Historian* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 122.

⁵² Rebecca Conrad, "Do You Hear What I Hear? Public History and the Interpretive Challenge," *The Public Historian* 22, no.1 (Winter 2000): 18.

⁵³ Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York: Random House, 1982). Both of these studies are still widely-used resources in the history of domestic life.

⁵⁴ David Peterson, "Social History and Local Museums" *Journal of American Culture* 12 (Summer 1989): 64-65.

⁵⁵ Some granting agencies, such as the National Endowment for the Humanities, require academic representation on exhibition committees and academic scholars often judge grant proposals. Therefore, most history museums have had to turn to academics in order to get funding for their exhibitions. Denker, 388.

⁵⁶ Thomas Schlereth has observed that "The ennobling effect of the museum environment affects not only visitors, but staff perceptions as well. When asked what great historical treasures the museum possessed, one curator at the National Museum responded that anything was a national treasure simply by being in the collection." "Museums and Material Culture," in *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 302.

⁵⁷ Jay Anderson, *Time Machines: The World of Living History* (Nashville, TN: American Association of State and Local History, 1984), 47.

- ⁷² Conner Prairie, *Historic Areas*, "Prairietown History," <<http://www.connerprairie.org/HistoricAreas/prairietownHistory.asp>> (21 June 2004).
- ⁷³ Stephen L. Cox, "Programming Race, Slavery, and the Underground Railroad," *History News* 54, no. 2 (Spring 1999), 17.
- ⁷⁴ Cox, 18-19.
- ⁷⁵ Cox, 20.
- ⁷⁶ Michael A. Chaney, "Touring the Spectacle of Slavery at Magnolia Gardens Plantation," *The Southern Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2002): 138.
- ⁷⁷ Michael Wallace, "Museums and Controversy," in *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 122.
- ⁷⁸ National Park Service, "The Working People Exhibit & The Boardinghouse System," brochure, nd, np.
- ⁷⁹ Catherine M. Cameron and John B. Gatewood, "Excursions into the Un-Remembered Past: What People Want from Visits to Historic Sites" *The Public Historian* 22, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 113,122-123.
- ⁸⁰ Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 221.
- ⁸¹ Jack Severson, "Authenticity: Colonial Williamsburg Strives for that 18th-Century Atmosphere, Right Down to the Road Apples," *Roanoke Times & World News*, 10 April 1994: F1, F6, quoted in Handler and Gable, who begin their book by asserting "Manure is authentic dirt," 6, 3.
- ⁸² Eric Gable, Richard Handler, and Anna Lawson, "On the Uses of Relativism: Fact, Conjecture, and Black and White Histories at Colonial Williamsburg" *American Ethnologist* 19, no. 4 (1992): 798-800.
- ⁸³ Handler and Gable, 54-55.
- ⁸⁴ Eric Gable and Richard Handler, "After Authenticity at an American Heritage Site" *American Anthropologist* 98, no. 3 (September 1996): 572.
- ⁸⁵ Handler and Gable, 46-48.
- ⁸⁶ Anders Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg* (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 45, 48-50.

⁸⁷ Greenspan, 67-70.

⁸⁸ Greenspan, 98-99.

⁸⁹ Reverend W. A. R. Goodwin, who conceived the idea of restoring Colonial Williamsburg, suggested reconstruction of slave quarters early in the site's development. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. did not share his interest in such a project. Greenspan, 28.

⁹⁰ Greenspan, 137-139, 142-143.

⁹¹ Quoted in Greenspan, 129.

⁹² Quoted in Greenspan, 138.

⁹³ The intellectual climate of the site during the 1950s, with its focus on democracy and Cold War politics, and the social climate of segregation blocked the incorporation of this information into interpretation. Greenspan, 114.

⁹⁴ Greenspan, 155.

⁹⁵ Christy Coleman Matthews, "Twenty Years Interpreting African American History: A Colonial Williamsburg Revolution" *History News* 54, no. 2 (Spring 1999), 8.

⁹⁶ Handler and Gable, 87.

⁹⁷ Handler and Gable, 114-115.

⁹⁸ Handler and Gable, 94.

⁹⁹ AAIP interpreter Christy Matthews (who participated in the auction) responded, "Of course it's a museum! We teach history here. The Williamsburg that you think we are is no longer the Williamsburg we really are." Cary Carson, "Colonial Williamsburg and the Practice of Interpretive Planning in American History Museums" *The Public Historian* 20, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 30.

¹⁰⁰ Matthews, 9.

¹⁰¹ Magelssen, 220.

¹⁰² In the year since our visit, Colonial Williamsburg has restructured the admission tickets in terms of extent of access and number of days one can visit. The "Patriot's Pass" is now known as the "Freedom Pass" and costs \$57/adult and \$29/youth.

¹⁰³ The catalogue for the recent exhibition, "Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People," which includes essays by Robert Rosenblum and Neil Harris, is an excellent example of the potential of complementary publications to amplify the scholarly

arguments of an exhibition. Clarissa J. Ceglio, "Exhibition Review: Complicating Simplicity" *American Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2002): 286-287.

¹⁰⁴ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Freedom, Equality, and Collaborative History at Colonial Williamsburg" *The Public Historian* 20, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 94.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUMS:

FROM SACRED TO SOCIALLY RELEVANT

Because public access to research is more immediate and more comprehensive than ever before, the public will begin to hold teachers of history in the twenty-first century to ever-higher standards of accuracy and inclusion. Historic house museums will be judged by these standards, as well, and their survival will depend, in many cases, upon the extent and effectiveness of their efforts to interpret their sites more fully.¹

Rex M. Ellis, "Interpreting the Whole House"

Traditionally, house museums have concentrated on a specific person, family, or event. This can be both a blessing and a challenge. On the positive side, the house museum's tight focus personalizes history. At its best, it illustrates how social forces affected one particular family, making otherwise general histories of society, technology, or family life more accessible and specific. As George McDaniel, executive director of Drayton Hall in Charleston, South Carolina, claims, they put the "‘skin' on the abstraction of time past."² In *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, Jessica Foy Donnelly identifies the immediate point of reference an audience has with these institutions: "No matter what its age, size, or style, or what life inside and outside was like, a *residence* is a universally understood place."³ However, house museum interpretation can also feature narrow, filopietistic hero stories, or laundry lists of rare or valuable objects with no clear connection to the house's history.

The historic house museum is a nearly ubiquitous institution. It may be found in the smallest of hamlets and the largest of cities. A comprehensive list of these museums does not exist, although estimates of the number of historic *sites* (not all houses) place their number at 6000.⁴ In 1999, AltaMira Press (in cooperation with the American

Association of State and Local History) published the *Directory of Historic House Museums in the United States*, which provides basic information about some 2300 house museums.⁵ The directory defines a historic house museum as “an historic house that is currently exhibited and interpreted as a dwelling place.”⁶ It provides an overview of their diversity in size, staff, facilities, and interpretive focus. Traditional house museums, like Gilded Age mansions and Antebellum plantations are well represented, but pioneer homesteads, cabins, adobes, ranches, and more unusual sites such as the 1950s All-Electric Model House in Shawnee, Kansas, are also included. A unique feature – a subject index of interpretive themes – illustrates the growing number of houses that reflect academic interest in previously underrepresented groups such as African American history, immigration, working- and middle-class history, and servant life.⁷ A survey of the interpretive themes reveals that not all the people immortalized at historic house museums are the very rich and/or famous, but the celebratory focus remains dominant. Like general history museums and living history sites, public fascination is partially based on the fact that these are real places where they may have an even more authentic connection to a person of the past by physically occupying their space.

In addition to their identity as “shrines,” house museums have other characteristics that separate them from general history museums and living history sites that affect the adoption of new trends in history scholarship. They are able to provide a unique, and to some degree authentic, physical context for their collections. Since the historic building is an artifact in its own right, preservation of the structure makes significant demands on financial resources in addition to maintenance of its contents, as well as a myriad of related costs such as insurance, staff, and programming. House

museums are also at a greater risk of stagnant interpretation because their collections tend to be static. However, like all museums, the ability to create fresh approaches to these sites depends heavily on the availability of money and the size and creativity of the staff, as well as the support of upper-management and trustees.

Most historic house museums have the ability to exhibit their collections *in situ*. General history museums display many of the same artifacts seen in historic houses—furnishings, domestic equipment, and personal items—but they are typically removed from their original setting and displayed behind glass. Artifacts, regardless of how ordinary, take on a sense of “sacredness” based on their presence in a museum. Svetlana Alpers refers to this phenomenon the “museum effect,” in which all objects become works of art when they are displayed in this context.⁸ Thus, exhibition of objects out of context can alter their interpretation. For example, in Brucemore’s permanent exhibition, located in the Visitor Center, a case featuring various media of music recordings creates a different effect than the display of an Edison phonograph in the Douglas family’s study. [Figures B-67 and B-68] Labels in the case display can describe the evolution of recorded music and its presence in a family’s collection, and an audiophile might admire the objects for their physical condition, but seeing the phonograph in the study suggests how this music was part of the Douglasses’ lives.

Perhaps even more than domestic or mass-produced objects, the display of artworks in their original context facilitates a different understanding of these pieces than experienced in a museum gallery. For example, in 1989, the curators at Olana, Frederic Edwin Church’s Hudson River home and studio, loaned his painting *El Kashne, Petra* to the National Gallery for a retrospective. [Figure B-69] In the gallery setting, viewers

were able to study the painting from a variety of distances and perspectives under ideal lighting conditions. At Olana, the painting hangs in Church's sitting room above a pink marble fireplace that reflects colors in the painting, but its position limits the visitor's ability to see the painting up close [Figure B-70]. Karen Zukowski, curator at Olana, described the impact of seeing the painting *in situ*:

A gift to Isabel Church, Frederic's wife, the painting is surrounded by other mementos of the family. It depicts a building thought to have been a treasury in the city of Petra, a mountain stronghold. Olana itself is named after a place in ancient Persia, a fortress/treasure house situated on a hill. The connection between the ancient 'Olana' and 'El Kashne,' both repositories of treasure, was intentional, and identifies the Sitting Room as the heart of the Church stronghold.⁹

Each viewing situation offers its own merits based on the story the painting or object is supporting. An art museum provides optimal conditions in which to discuss a painting's formal characteristics and its place within a particular stylistic period or genre. However, the home offers an intimate setting to interpret the way people lived with paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts. House museum interpreters often emphasize their site's ability to exhibit the "real thing" in the "real place" by using much of their tour time to point out objects and architectural features that are "original."

The major disadvantage of the historic house setting for artifacts is that the rooms tend to be idealized recreations of the originals, and in some ways are more artificial than living history sites where food smells, flies, and dirt often are present. Instead, nothing is left out of order, dirt or odors that may have existed in the room have been removed; it is effectively sanitized and frozen in time. The house museum interior can take on the tomb-like emptiness of a vacant stage set, much like period rooms in history museums.¹⁰ Some house staff are experimenting with "moment in time" interpretation, which depicts

an activity in progress, as a way to add life to a visitor's experience, but not all sites have the necessary collections or documented stories that would enable this.

The collections at most house museums typically change little once furnishings and interpretive plans are established. Many historic houses come with a collection of family furnishings, art objects, and in some cases, archives of letters, photographs, and documents of the family's domestic life. The amount of material varies greatly. Some sites are artifact rich and document poor, others the opposite, while still others have little in either category. The Alexander Ramsey House in St. Paul, Minnesota, for example, has a rich collection that allows staff to change room settings according to seasons or occasions, but most sites are not so fortunate. House museums often have collections policies that limit their acceptance of gifts to items that belonged to former residents or are from the house's interpretive period. Such gifts are few and far between, which leads to period rooms that look the same from year to year. This situation presents little incentive for repeat visitation, except during the Christmas season when most house museums tend to be decked out in holiday finery. Interpretation frequently becomes stagnant both for the tour guides and the visitors.¹¹ Efforts to breathe new life into house museum tours have included exploring the perspective of domestic servants, children, and the lady of the house. New perspectives on social history have also made an impact on preservation by encouraging protection of the "real" places primarily associated with women, racial and ethnic minorities, and the lower and middle classes.

From Sacred to Relevant

The beginning of any house as a public historic site plays an important role in the development of the story guides tell its visitors. Material culture scholar Thomas J.

Schlereth has observed, "A historic house possesses at least two histories: its past and present life as a house museum."¹² For some sites, preservation and restoration often become an important part of their narratives. In most cases, the original reasons for preserving a site affect the subsequent interpretation. Early preservation criteria, for example, favored birthplaces or residences of important individuals and sites of significant events, and consequently skewed representation of the past in favor of the elites and solidified the "sacred" associations of the sites themselves.¹³

The shift from interpreting historic sites as "sacred" to "relevant" has not been a completely linear development, although interpretation has been increasingly influenced by recent scholarship in social history and cultural pluralism during the last twenty-five years. However, since many house museums still reflect the filiopietistic model in their founding and operation, the transition is not complete, and may never be. Such changes evolve slowly at what are by definition conservative institutions.

The first house museums in the United States were connected with George Washington. The Hasbrouck House in Newburgh, New York, which served as the headquarters of his Continental Army between 1782-1783, became the first house museum in 1850. Later that decade, "Southern matron" Ann Pamela Cunningham began her crusade to save Mount Vernon and open it as a shrine to the first president.¹⁴ While her effort was initially confined to Southern women, it became clear that the campaign would have to expand north in order to raise the necessary funds. Cunningham then appealed to both northern and southern women in the midst of growing sectional tensions. In 1854, she suggested that through preservation of Mount Vernon, women could set an example of rising above the conflict:

We neither desire nor intend sectionality. We feel none towards those whose patriotism knows no North, South, East, or West. If ever in the future period of our national history, the Union should ever be in serious danger, political storms rocking it to its base, or rendering it in twain, there will be such a moral grandeur (perhaps an assuaging influence we cannot now estimate) in the mere fact that the tomb of Washington rests secure under the flag of his native state, enshrined in the devotional reverence of the wives, mothers, and daughters of the Union.¹⁵

Cunningham's eventual success laid the groundwork for preservation of other houses, serving as an example of volunteer leadership and a national effort spearheaded by women.¹⁶ As a result, other women's groups began campaigns to save historic buildings, including the Daughters of the American Revolution and the National Society of Colonial Dames. Such activities were considered appropriate for women due to their connection to the domestic sphere.¹⁷ Other early preservation activities centered on notable national figures. The Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, for example, saved and restored the home of Mary Ball Washington and erected a sign on the property reading, "Home of Mary, Mother of George, Shrine Open Daily."¹⁸ The parallel with Christ's mother, "Mary, Mother of God," was surely intentional. Crusaders hoping to save these sites often presented the buildings as holy places worthy of pilgrimage: "We hope that this appeal will strike the keynote of patriotism and that in a very few years the home of Andrew Jackson, the beautiful Hermitage, will be the Mecca of all true patriots in the United States and of historic interest to the touring stranger."¹⁹

Preservationists used these historic sites to promote specific values or ideologies, most often patriotism or appropriate roles for women. The early years of historic preservation coincided with major demographic changes in the United States due to immigration, which prompted groups such as the DAR to promote historical landmarks as instruments in the Americanization of immigrants and their children.²⁰ Other

ideological goals involved the advocacy of specific concepts of morality or gender roles. To achieve these ideals, preservationists often emphasized one aspect of a resident's life to create the desired message. For example, the founders of Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House, the Concord Women's Club, provided a shrine to the characters of *Little Women* to teach domesticity, ignoring Alcott's suffragist sentiments. The result was a simplification of both the novel and its author. Patricia West explains that:

The genius of *Little Women* was that it preserved the deeply felt values of domesticity through the insular warmth of the March cottage, while simultaneously expressing Jo's rebellion against its restrictions. Thus the domestically located trials of the fictional Jo March provided a better basis for a universally appealing 'shrine' than could those of the actual unmarried, prosuffrage working woman, Louisa May Alcott. Just as Alcott 'invented' her own life story in *Little Women*, the Concord Women's Club 'invented' the history of Orchard House.²¹

Although today Orchard House credits Alcott with her advocacy of progressive social movements, her famous novel still provides the inspiration for the site's interpretation.²² There the ideal—a fictional family based loosely on the real residents—remains favored over the real.

William Sumner Appleton, a New Englander with the financial resources to devote himself to whatever causes captured his imagination, discovered historic preservation in 1905 through a campaign to save the Boston State House.²³ In 1910, he founded the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), which expanded the criteria of significance to include architectural treasures, and thus emphasized a more formalistic approach based on connoisseurship. Appleton proclaimed his passion for saving New England architecture in his 1913 pamphlet *Colonial Homes of New England, Shall They Be Saved?:*

The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities was organized on the theory that eternal vigilance is the price of the preservation of our remaining colonial houses. Its chief purpose is to save for future generations structures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the early years of the nineteenth, which are architecturally beautiful or unique, or have special historical significance. Such buildings once destroyed can never be replaced. The loss of such an edifice as the home of John Hancock on Beacon Street, Boston is irreparable.²⁴

Appleton's interest in preserving New England's architectural past was part of a larger interest in finding and reclaiming the region's history that was increasingly disappearing in the post-Civil War industrial landscape. Collecting antique books and furniture became popular pastimes; restorations of houses and artifacts took place in Deerfield and Salem, Massachusetts.²⁵ Although Appleton's wealth permitted him to take on multiple, large-scale preservation projects, he was one of many wishing to save New England's "antiquities" in the shadow of the modern urban and industrial city.

Unlike preservation efforts in European countries, the American movement began as private endeavors. The first federally-controlled historic house was Arlington House, seized in 1861 as a spoil of the Civil War since it had belonged to Confederate general Robert E. Lee.²⁶ However, the United States government's involvement with historic preservation did not accelerate until well into the twentieth century. The National Park Service (NPS) was created in 1916 as a branch of the Department of the Interior to supervise natural sites, but by 1933, it had expanded to maintain historic battlefields previously maintained by the War Department. The federal government's entry into preservation coincided with the concern that the nation's past was disappearing and the creation of New Deal projects that documented the diversity of American culture.²⁷

Programs such as the Historic American Building Survey (HABS), Federal Writers Project state guides, and the Index of American Design made lasting contributions to the

history of architecture and preservation.²⁸ Works Progress Administration workers constructed visitor centers for many of the NPS sites, some of which are still in use.

The passage of the Historic Sites Act in 1935 further involved the federal government in historic preservation. It “called for the creation of a national survey of historic sites; it encouraged cooperative agreements with private and governmental bodies for the maintenance of those sites; and it empowered the secretary of the interior to accept properties as part of a system of national historic sites.”²⁹ The park historian and his staff drew up standards for federal historic sites by designating three types of areas considered worthy of federal support: those that “clearly illustrated an important theme in the history of the nation,” sites associated with famous Americans, or sites of specific historical events.³⁰ Today, the NPS continues to maintain a variety of sites including battlefields, parks, and historic homes, but it is increasingly active in preserving and interpreting sites that reflect the nation’s diversity.

Since World War II, the number of historic house museums in the United States has increased substantially. In fact, some people in the field worry that there may be too many.³¹ During these years of rapid expansion, historic house professionals started rethinking the messages their sites presented to visitors. The establishment of new preservation organizations, funding agencies, and the professionalization of museum staff initiated the shift from house museums as shrines to sites of social relevance. The National Trust for Historic Preservation is an example of a significant preservation organization of the post-WWII era whose message has evolved over time. Chartered by Congress in 1949, its original charge was to “receive donations of sites, buildings, and objects significant in American history and culture, to preserve and administer them for

the public benefit.”³² The Trust began creating its own “collection” of historic properties with Woodlawn Plantation in Mount Vernon, Virginia, the home of Eleanor Parke Custis Lewis, who was raised by her grandparents, George and Martha Washington. Most of the early properties were the southern and northeastern homes of great men and artists such as James Madison, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Daniel Chester French.

In recent years, however, the National Trust has expanded the scope of its collection and interpretation, both geographically and thematically. Houses in the Midwest and in California have joined the early sites. In the past two decades, the Trust has been a driving force in encouraging more diversity in the preservation movement, both in the types of structures saved and in the community of preservationists. Three of its recent acquisitions and affiliate sites, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum (New York City), the Gaylord Building (Lockport, Illinois), and Touro Synagogue (Rhode Island) show an interest in telling stories related to America’s diverse immigrant heritage and the commercial and religious aspects of the American experience. The Trust has held interpretation workshops on historic landscapes, domestic service, and childhood to educate house museum professionals about new angles of interpretation. The organization has recently moved beyond their original focus on collecting historic properties to become a vocal opponent of urban sprawl and a catalyst for preservation of neighborhoods and Main Streets, including those in ethnic and low-income areas.³³ The Trust is also one of the few mainstream preservation organizations to recognize gay and lesbian preservationists and sites related to their history.³⁴

While there are promising changes occurring in the preservation and interpretation of historic houses, “shrines” connected with presidents and well-known

personalities continue to open.³⁵ However, these places of pilgrimage are balanced by many newly opened historic homes with staff interested in telling the stories of lesser-known figures, women, and minorities to the public. Since most of these residents left little material culture behind, they also encourage interpretation through an idea-based narrative as opposed to the traditional approach focused on objects. American preservation movements and the resulting interpretation of house museums have had an elitist cast throughout their history, but some are making efforts to diversify the people involved and the stories told. Domestic service, both free and enslaved, has become a key theme for introducing the complexities of race, gender, and class into the stories told to house museum visitors.

Telling Stories About Domestic Service

In 1986, Patricia West, a curator at Lindenwald, President Martin Van Buren's home in upstate New York published the initial "charge" for house museums to begin investigating their domestic servants and presenting their roles in educational programs. At her site, she explained, "we have introduced the house servants, young Irish women, into our interpretive program. This raises the issues of ethnicity, gender, class, and work, which we consider to be significant interpretative material illustrating the incorporation of 'the new social history' into a house museum."³⁶ This recommendation has since spread throughout the historic house community. Sherry Butcher-Young's *Historic House Museums* (1993), the only comprehensive reference for house museum care, preservation, interpretation, and management includes the following advice: "Avoid presenting a romanticized view of the house and events surrounding it, or elevating the former residents to the stature of 'great men and women.'" Butcher-Young's

recommends that interpretation should be broad and include servants, slaves, gardeners, and chauffeurs, among others.³⁷ The authors of new interpretation manuals for historic house museums, *Great Tours!* (2001) and *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (2002) call attention to the importance of servants and enslaved people in house tours. Each offers practical advice about starting new interpretive programs and recommendations training guides to address controversial topics.³⁸ An NPS bulletin from 2000, “Telling the Stories,” instructs interpretation planners to embrace controversy by noting that “interpretation that avoids difficult subjects presents an unrealistic and ultimately uninteresting view of the past.”³⁹ Two recent essay collections focusing on preserving and interpreting women’s history include articles that specifically address ways that domestics can be integrated into tours and special programs.⁴⁰ Clearly, the interpretation of domestic service has many advocates, and their voices have become even louder just in the past five to ten years.

At least one workshop in the past decade put the spotlight on the interpretation of domestic servants. In October 1994, the National Trust for Historic Preservation presented a one-day conference for historic site staff entitled “The View from the Kitchen.” The session attracted historical society and house museum personnel from across the country. Lectures by historians of domestic service provided the necessary context for understanding household work between the mid 1800s and mid 1900s.⁴¹ Barbara Carson, a historian and material culture specialist, addressed how the history of domestic service can figure in the presentation of objects typically associated only with the owner families, a technique she calls “perspectivist interpretation.” Speakers gave advice on how to research domestic servants, warning that museum professionals need to

get used to working with “fragmentary evidence.”⁴² Conference participants divided into smaller groups later in the day to work with museum professionals including Christy S. Coleman, then-director of African-American Interpretations and Presentations at Colonial Williamsburg, Meggett Lavin, curator of education and research at Drayton Hall in Charleston, South Carolina, and Sandra Mackenzie Lloyd, the curator of education at Clivden in Philadelphia. These group leaders presented examples of first- and third-person interpretation and new approaches that better acknowledge the presence and activities of servants.⁴³ The day’s final event was the screening of *Freedom Bags*, a documentary produced by Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, whose oral histories of former black domestics in Washington D.C. became the core of the film and her book *Living In, Living Out*. Participants received an annotated bibliography of domestic service scholarship and copies of information sheets completed by attendees describing how their sites interpreted domestic service. Those who could not attend had the opportunity to order audio tapes of the lectures from the National Trust. Articles about the workshop in the Trust’s periodical, *[Historic] Preservation* and the AASLH’s *History News* summarized the proceedings of the event.⁴⁴ By providing an overview of the history of domestic service and practical suggestions from other colleagues, “The View from the Kitchen” was not only a rich resource for sites anxious to incorporate the stories of servants, but also an indication of the growing importance of the topic to house museum professionals.

Although by the mid-1990s interest in interpreting domestic service had spread, there was little compiled evidence to illustrate how successful these efforts were in practice. As the core of her master’s thesis, “A More Complete History: Interpreting Domestic Servants at Historic House Museums,” Patricia Chambers Walker conducted a

nationwide survey of historic house museums regarding their interpretation of servants.⁴⁵ Her goals were to learn whether or not servants are interpreted at house museums, how the site is used in such interpretations, if domestic servants are interpreted separately or in conjunction with the house owners, to what extent servant life is discussed beyond their work, and the difficulties of developing and implementing this type of interpretation.⁴⁶ Of 1001 surveys, Walker received 592 completed surveys, about 60 percent. Of all survey participants, 421 museums (68 percent) fit the criteria for her study, mainly that servants were known to have worked there; of these, 81.8 percent reported including information about servants in their interpretation. In her data analysis, Walker identifies sites according to whether servants were free or enslaved.⁴⁷ Making this distinction allowed her to compare the way interpretation of domestic service had developed in each.

Ninety-eight percent of sites interpreting domestic servants identified providing “visitors with a better, more complete history of the site” as their main motivation, a nod to the concern shared by other history museums about authenticity. For some sites, information about servants is used “to enhance or expand” interpretation of the owners, or to help visitors understand the home’s architecture.⁴⁸ Although 81.8 percent of sites capable of interpreting servants are doing so, not all make servants central to their tours. For some sites, servants are discussed occasionally in anecdotes, at others, they inspire a major interpretive theme. Most fall somewhere in between.⁴⁹

To better understand the extent to which sites made servants a part of their tours, Walker assessed the “depth” of servant interpretation according to the inclusion of work and living conditions and personal aspects of servant life, such as family life, leisure activities, or conflict with employers or other servants. Sites describing just work duties

or conditions were considered limited in their interpretation. 68.4 percent of sites interpreting domestic service did so “in-depth.” She found determining depth of interpretation difficult since some sites may cover many issues but superficially. Walker’s survey did not ask respondents to indicate the importance of particular themes within the broad subject of domestic service.

In some cases, servants are only supporting characters in the site’s interpretation, usually enhancing the depiction of the owners and their family. A Texas respondent noted that “Interpretation of the servants is presented as it relates to the role of the woman of the house. We discuss her responsibilities and duties and her relationship with the domestic help on site.”⁵⁰ Such interpretations fail to acknowledge servants’ individuality and the fact that they were more than just support for their employers. Some sites wanted to offer more detailed interpretation but have limited information, or were in the process of doing the necessary research.⁵¹

Walker’s survey identified several factors that hinder the interpretation of servants, such as lack of documentary evidence and/or artifacts, inadequate finances and staff to conduct research, or servants’ rooms that are closed to the public or no longer extant. Many sites also had small servant staffs that were difficult to document, or servants residing off-site who did not leave much evidence of their presence.⁵² 36.5 percent respondents rated limited information as “very challenging,” on a scale of one (1) being “not challenging” to five (5) “very challenging.”⁵³ 32 percent of respondents rated lack of relevant artifacts “very challenging.”⁵⁴ Only 37.8 percent of all sites had servant rooms or buildings open to the public. The spaces had been converted for practical use as offices, storage, or restrooms, or were not accessible due to fire codes requiring more

than one exit. Many outbuildings have been demolished that could have helped tell the story of servants or additional workers on the site.⁵⁵

Based on the culture war battles of the 1990s, one might expect that staff, board members, guides, or visitors have had some anxiety about including potentially sensitive topics like those surrounding servants. However, Walker's survey reported little resistance to interpreting domestic service from any group. What little there was came from within the institution (staff, board, or volunteers) rather than from visitors, and was slightly more common at slavery and combination (interpretive period includes years before and after slavery) sites than at those interpreting free servants.⁵⁶ Objections to new material about domestic servants were often unrelated to the content: "Responses indicated that this was more a general resistance to change than to the subject matter. A respondent from New York summarized the problem by noting that 'some of our volunteers, who do not like change in the routine of their tour, objected to this additional material.'" Respondents from all parts of the country made similar comments.⁵⁷ Walker documented only one instance of volunteer resistance to the content. According to this respondent, "two former male interpreters thought: 1 – it wasn't important enough to interpret, 2 – thought it was degrading to his Irish nationality."⁵⁸

The relative ease with which free (non-slave) sites have incorporated domestic service warrants further investigation of their content and approach. While free sites do not have the burden of interpreting the brutality of slavery, these sites, even those whose servants had white skin, were rarely free of conflict, as suggested in the earlier discussion of the "servant problem." Walker's survey evidence indicates that beyond describing the difficulties of the physical labor, free sites were less likely to address controversy than

slave sites. Of those classified by Walker as “in-depth,” slaves sites were more than twice as likely to interpret conflict between servants and their employers or other servants.⁵⁹ Slave sites also provided more information about leisure activities and family and community life than their counterparts at free sites. Based on this survey, slave sites seem to do a better job putting the world of enslaved people into a broader context by defining them outside of their work roles. Some may also find interpreting slavery more balanced when information about family and leisure activities are included. At free sites, the interpretation seems to relate primarily to servants as laborers.

At slave sites, differences based on race are always at issue, whether interpreters choose to address them or not. Servants as “others” may not be as apparent to guides and visitors at free sites (particularly those in the North) where servants were white, whether they were foreign or native born. Even though the majority of domestics came from foreign countries, Walker found that free sites tended to avoid discussing ethnicity and related prejudices. A respondent from a California site commented that “servants were Chinese, but we try not to make an issue of nationality . . . as we don’t want to step on toes.” Personnel from another California site explained that the Chinese cook Wah “is minutely and complimentarily described – he’s educated, neat, and the family sends his body to China to be buried and contributes to his benevolent society. Our people are always civilized, unprejudiced and p.c. [politically correct].”⁶⁰ Walker also noted the common reference to servants as “part of the family,” and that respondents from free sites tended to lean towards a concern for positive interpretations of servant and employer relationships.⁶¹ That some servants were able to maintain positive relationships with their employers is not impossible or unlikely, but such a relationship should not be

represented as one of equals. At the end of the day, one party always has power over the other.⁶² The mistress/servant friendship has the potential to become a complicated and fascinating issue for visitors if interpreters approach it in its historical context and from the perspectives of both parties. For example, sites could consider which types of servants (by ethnicity or by duty) were most likely to develop such a relationship with their employers, how this would affect relationships with other members of the servant staff, and the fact that servants generally knew much more about their employers' lives than the reverse.

Walker's survey, although unpublished, has provided a valuable baseline for additional research on the interpretation of servants. She clearly established that house museum staff are generally aware of the need to research and interpret domestic servants, that the amount of attention the subject receives is variable, and the lack of documentary and artifactual resources is considered a significant challenge to developing new interpretation. Walker also indicated subtle differences in the responses of sites that interpret free or enslaved domestics. Several scholars have analyzed the attempts of plantation sites to overcome these difficulties and the controversies inherent in interpreting slavery. They argue that simply acknowledging slavery says little and that how a site interprets it is the most important concern.

Reinterpreting the Past at Plantation Museums

For most Southern plantations, a longstanding focus on the owner family is difficult to change. The myths of the "Old South" and the "lost cause" continue to drive the mystique of plantation sites. However, human bondage and ownership, violence, abuse, and racism are but some of the issues that need to be addressed in order to provide

a full picture of life on a plantation. Some sites have made important steps toward a balanced representation of white owners and enslaved people at plantations, but many others ignore the issue or continue to represent it inaccurately.

As described in chapter two, Colonial Williamsburg has made significant inroads in the interpretation of slavery within the context of a historic village. However, the urban slavery discussed at Williamsburg is quite different than that of the plantation, where house slaves occupied a different level in the plantation hierarchy compared to field hands. At individual sites, staff can focus in more detail on the social system that created differences not only between white and black, but among the plantation's enslaved residents. Williamsburg also has the resources of a large staff of historians and to do research and constantly revisit its interpretive programs, unlike the majority of smaller plantation museums.

Walker's survey indicated that while slave sites have more difficulty finding documents and artifacts to tell their stories, they are also more willing to address controversy than sites interpreting free servants.⁶³ The former more often cited limited information and personnel as "very challenging." Lack of relevant artifacts also posed more of a problem for slave and combination sites.⁶⁴ Resistance from individuals within the institution and the public created few obstacles at slave sites, which was even less common in the North. Walker found that "The majority of slavery and combination sites indicated that they felt that dealing with controversial issues was at most only moderately challenging by rating it a three (3) or less out of five (5). However, several respondents indicated that there were always exceptions to the general acceptance of the subject by the staff."⁶⁵ The survey indicated that volunteers (who are most often white) were more

likely than other personnel to be uncomfortable with the decision to interpret slavery, which is understandable considering they have the most direct contact with visitors. A Virginia respondent commented that “interpreters had some concerns about offending visitors by their handling of such a sensitive and potentially explosive topic,” and the presence of African-Americans in their groups tended to create additional anxiety.⁶⁶ The unease of staff and volunteers with discussing slavery ultimately becomes manifest in their tours, which often include statements that are inaccurate or trivializing. When guides lack confidence in the material about slavery, they are more likely to omit it or make comments such as, “Yes, slavery was bad but [the master of this house] was good to his slaves.”

Some scholars have acknowledged that the history of slavery is a very difficult subject to present in a public venue, and interpreters have to teach this material under less than ideal conditions. Most guided tours average one hour, which is not enough time to present enough information to address slavery in a meaningful and accurate way. James Oliver Horton argues that Americans are grossly misinformed about the history of slavery: “Generally, Americans believe that slavery was a southern phenomenon, date it from the antebellum period, and do not think of it as central to the American story. The first task for the public historian is to assess and attempt to address popular ignorance of slavery’s diversity, longevity, complexity, and centrality.”⁶⁷

In the eyes of many academics, the overall interpretation of slavery at plantations is still unsatisfying despite the significant improvements of the past twenty years. Sites receiving accolades for their progress are the exception rather than the rule. In the past ten years, three book-length “travelogues” have raised awareness of the omissions and

mistruths at historic sites. Philip Burnham's *How the Other Half Lived* (1995) and James Loewen's *Lies Across America: What our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (1999) address the blunders of a wide variety of historic sites as well as monuments and markers. Both books, particularly Loewen's, are very accessible to general audiences and have the potential to make an impact by educating potential visitors of historic sites. Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small's *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (2002) provides a detailed analysis of how slavery is or is not discussed on plantation tours in Virginia, Georgia, and Louisiana. These book-length critiques and the occasional essay on this topic all use participant observation as their primary tool. Posing as the average visitor, these scholars collectively took hundreds of house tours to gather their information. Their findings indicate that even when slavery is interpreted at plantations, its educational value is often diminished by poor interpretive techniques.

Eichstedt and Small's research resulted in the most critical and detailed analysis of slavery interpretation to date. They restate many of the arguments made by previous authors on the subject and develop a typology of four representational/discursive strategies used by plantation museums to interpret slavery and African Americans: symbolic annihilation and erasure, trivialization and deflection, segregation and marginalization, and relative incorporation.⁶⁸ These strategies are used singly and in combination. Eichstedt and Small argue that overall "these sites work to construct and maintain public white (male-dominated) racial identities that both articulate with and bolster a sense of (white) pride in a partial history of freedom, democracy, and hard work."

In this story, slavery and African Americans are presented as almost incidental to the growth of the South, and by extension, the United States.”⁶⁹

Symbolic annihilation and erasure wipe away the existence of enslaved people and their work. It is defined as interpretation that focuses exclusively on the material and social life of the plantation owners; neglects to mention, acknowledge, or discuss slavery, the enslaved, or African Americans; mentions the enslaved or free blacks in fleeting ways that lack details or context; uses euphemisms such as “servants” or “servitude”; uses the passive voice or neutral pronouns to discuss enslaved people; and uses universal or ahistorical statements that only refer to white experiences.⁷⁰ 25 percent of the 122 sites in the study “failed to mention slavery or the enslaved in *any way whatsoever*,” and nearly 83 percent used symbolic annihilation as one of their primary strategies. A common way to erase the presence of slaves or other workers is to draw the visitor’s attention to another aspect of the house. The tendency of tour guides to focus on details such as furnishings and decorative arts is typical at many house museums, but Eichstedt and Small quantify just how unbalanced such interpretation is. By tracking the number of references to furniture and slavery or those enslaved, they determined that at sixty-five sites using symbolic annihilation there are thirty-one times as many references to furniture than of slavery or the enslaved.⁷¹ This tendency has been reversed at Somerset Place, a restored plantation in Creswell, North Carolina. Director Dorothy Spruill Redford, whose ancestors were enslaved at Somerset, teaches interpreters to “mention slavery within the first twenty sentences and to keep talk about furniture to a minimum.”⁷²

Small's description of his visit to Nottaway Plantation in Louisiana illustrates many elements of symbolic annihilation. In the main hall, the guide described nearly every object *except* two eight-and-one-half foot tall statues of black servants. She noted that the family acquired three hundred slaves and fifty-seven household servants over the years, but kept her tour's focus on the owner's business prowess and ingenuity. When the guide did mention slaves (usually referred to as "servants"), she used the passive voice. Small inquired about a small, severely neglected barn-type building on the grounds, and was told that it was "just an old building – an old slave building."⁷³ At other plantation museums the two scholars found slave quarters turned into restrooms or bed-and-breakfast units [Figure B-71]. A docent at a different Louisiana site even said, "I wish we had some [slave cabins]; they would make pretty little bed-and-breakfast rooms."⁷⁴

The devices of symbolic annihilation have been noted in other critiques of slavery interpretation. In a feature story for *Preservation*, Adam Goodheart described his visit to Monmouth Plantation, where slaves are ignored on the tour and visitors can stay in reconstructed slave cabins.⁷⁵ At Hampton, a plantation in Maryland, Loewen observes that "Guides supply the minutiae about the things – silverware, portraits, porcelain – but volunteer nothing about the people who worked there to pay for them."⁷⁶

Sites using trivialization and deflection as their primary strategies are described as those where slavery and those enslaved are mentioned, but in ways that trivialize their experiences, often by using humor. Eichstedt and Small identify two categories of this strategy. One suggests that slavery was not that bad, and even beneficial for the enslaved, citing happy and loyal slaves. The other emphasizes whites and whiteness over

blacks and enslavement. Trivialization and deflection often co-exist with symbolic annihilation.⁷⁷

Eichstedt and Small offer several examples of this approach in action. In some cases guides mention that enslaved people were sometimes better off than poor whites.⁷⁸

Our guide for the “Other Half” tour at Colonial Williamsburg also equated the status of poor whites and enslaved Africans but reminded the group that the big difference was that even poor whites had more rights than those enslaved because they were *free*. The myth of the happy or grateful slave enforces stereotypes of Africans as childlike;

Eichstedt and Small heard these stories at 19 percent of sites.⁷⁹ Loewen has also commented that depictions of happy or grateful slaves trivializes the horrors of slavery:

“Never have I seen on display a whip, whipping post, chains, fetters, branding iron, or any of the advanced technology of mobile human confinement that owners devised.”⁸⁰

An example from Rosedown Plantation in Louisiana shows how the loyal slave and good master can be packaged together on the tour. Tours at Rosedown are self-guided and use taped narrations in various parts of the house. In the kitchen, “Henrietta, the slave cook” talks about the benevolence of her master:

Miss Martha, we all love her, she is good and kind. . . . You know, once a week, Massa give each slave, men, women, girls, and boys, when they’s old enough to go to the field, five pounds of good clean bacon, one quart of molasses, and as much meal for bread as they want and one pint of coffee. . . . the worst times we ever had were when the Yankee men came through. . . . The war is over now, and we free now. We ain’t have no celebration after we’s freed. We ain’t even know we was freed until a good while after. After that, Miss Martha let all the slaves go, ‘cept for me, I stayed.⁸¹

Eichstedt and Small do not indicate the source of the cook’s story, whether it is a complete fiction or loosely based on an actual Rosedown slave. This slave’s story is in

the same spirit of the slave narrator of Sallie Dooley's *Dem Good Ole Times*, and reflects the same nostalgia that former slave owners felt after the Civil War.⁸²

Identifying the master as a "good owner" valorizes whiteness. 35 percent of all sites, even those whose interpretation fits the rhetorical strategy of relative incorporation, presented the master as a positive figure. Guides described slaves as "like family" or as an "investment" that should not be damaged.⁸³ Sites emphasized whiteness by representing the owner-enslaver as industrious and hard workers in their own rights, as seen in an exhibit panel at Stratford Hall Plantation in Virginia: "The story of the colonial planter is the story of a great occupational versatility and unremitting toil. The planter was relieved of some of his physical toil by the widespread use of slave labor, but he assumed complete supervisory control of this agricultural and mercantile enterprise."⁸⁴ Such interpretations misplace the bulk of the labor as the burden of the white owner, thus trivializing the enslaved people who endured the hardest work without the benefit of freedom.

At some plantations, slavery is discussed using the strategy of segregated knowledge, in which it is interpreted separately from the traditional, white-focused information.⁸⁵ Sites that offer special tours focused on slavery or African-American history engage in this practice, such as Colonial Williamsburg's "Other Half" tour. The main problem with such tours is that only a small percentage of visitors take them due to limited availability. They are usually offered on a regular basis only during peak seasons (generally April through October), and vary from being monthly to daily or twice daily. On the Mount Vernon slave life tours taken by Eichstedt and Small, the guide noted that the content would be limited to what was known about slavery at the site and would not

address slavery in general. By avoiding the big picture, docents could evade the overall unpleasantness of slavery as an institution and would not have to compare George Washington to other owner-enslavers. In isolation, Washington could be depicted as a man ““born into a society that accepted slavery,”” who provided good quarters, plenty of food, and Sundays and holidays off.⁸⁶ The staff does discuss slave rebellions, but qualifies them by explaining that they rebelled against their captivity, not their enslaver (even though he participated in the system that enslaved them). At other sites, Eichstedt and Small found separate exhibits about slavery that provided specific examples of the master’s brutality, but were balanced by examples of the good master.⁸⁷ A more accurate way to “balance” the evils of slavery would be to describe the ways that enslaved people created strategies for survival and self-preservation in spite of their conditions. That enslaved Africans and their descendents survived enslavement had less to do with the benevolence of their masters than the strength of their own characters and communities.

Another way that information about slavery is segregated is based on the location in which it is discussed. An African American interpreter at Arlington House observed that visitors were more likely to discuss slavery in the slave quarters, but not in the main house. Visitors were comfortable learning about the work, but less interested in slave-master relationships.⁸⁸ This type of interpretation is common at free and slave sites, and as Walker suggested, sites that focus primary on work provide a limited view of domestic service.

When given by a knowledgeable guide, slave life tours can be the best part of a visit to a plantation site. Since these programs and interpretation have developed primarily in the past twenty years, they are more likely to be the product of trained

historians and more sound in terms of scholarship. Special slave life tours may create “segregated knowledge” but they also have positive aspects. They direct visitors’ attention to a specific subject matter and provide a more detailed interpretation because they have a narrower focus. One may wonder why, if a site has enough information about enslaved people to create a special tour, why isn’t more of this information in the standard, everyday tour? The answer is usually a lack of time—so much to see, so little time to talk about it all. In order to extend the length of a standard tour or make special slave life tours part of every visitor’s experience, sites would most likely have to increase their guide staff or offer fewer tours each day, neither of which are feasible for institutions with tight budgets. The varied attention spans of visitors must also be considered; a one-hour guided tour tends to be a comfortable length for most.

Only 3.3 percent the plantation museums in Eichstedt and Small’s study were identified as practicing relative incorporation. These sites provided information about slavery throughout the tour that was not degrading, discussed specific slaves, and indicated that learning about enslavement at their property has importance. They acknowledged that the ability of one race to live at a higher standard was based on the subjugation of another, and presented a more complicated interpretation of the master-enslaver and his family, instead of simply focusing on their hospitality, benevolence, and other positive characteristics.⁸⁹

Eichstedt and Small identified Montpelier, the home of James Madison in Orange, Virginia, as a site where relative incorporation is the primary rhetorical strategy. Visitors tour the house with an Acoustiguide, a handheld listening device with a keypad. Each location is assigned a number that the visitor enters to hear the interpretation. At

Montpelier, most locations feature four or more narrations, allowing the visitor to choose to listen to the more general interpretations in addition to information about specific themes or personalities. In terms of the overall content, slavery is consistently part of the narrated tour and enslaved workers are credited with performing the labor necessary to maintain the lifestyle of the Madisons. The narration also describes the social lives of the enslaved at Montpelier including their right to Sundays off and their additional production of food and baked goods for trade with other enslaved people or white masters. The character of the “good master” is not absent, but it is balanced by information about documented slave resistance and rebellion and the acknowledgement that the true feelings of those enslaved toward their masters are difficult to know. One segment in particular speaks to the ambiguity of most sources: “It is difficult to know how Montpelier’s slaves felt toward their master. Visitor Margaret Bayard Smith noted of a maid who was helping her: ‘Nany, you have a good mistress.’ And Nany replied, ‘Yes, the best I believe in the world. I am sure I would not change her for any mistress in the whole country.’ It is not possible to know whether this statement reflected Nany’s true feelings.”⁹⁰

Montpelier’s staff is willing to address the complicated personality of the white enslaver, particularly in the case of one of the founding fathers. Eichstedt and Small found that Montpelier tours present Madison as “a statesman, generous host, and so on, but recognized as someone who enslaved other people. Further his ‘comfortable existence’ is credited to the labor of enslaved people.”⁹¹ The use of the Acoustiguide as an interpretive tool plays a significant role in the success of this well-rounded interpretation. It gives the site staff more control over content and consistency, while

giving visitors some liberties to choose their own path and tailor the tour somewhat to their interests (although based on Eichstedt and Small’s experiences, it seems that it is more difficult to “segregate” information about slavery). However, this option is typically well out of the price range for most historic house museums, and some museum staff find its impersonal approach less appealing than the warmth and personality provided by a human being.

Monticello, Thomas Jefferson’s home in Charlottesville, Virginia, faces similar challenges in terms of interpreting a founding father as a slave owner. This site has made significant improvements in the interpretation of Jefferson as a statesman, a slave owner, and most likely the father of slave Sally Hemings’ children. Eichstedt and Small identify Monticello as one of the 9.8 percent of sites they describe as “in-between,” which are defined as sites that “attempt to incorporate the discussion of enslavement throughout their tours—or at least some docents do. At the same time they back into trivializing practices or, depending on the docent, into symbolic annihilation.”⁹² The visitor encounters the topic of slavery during the house tour, in self-guided portions of the estate, and through a special tour of Mulberry Row, a row of excavated work buildings and slaves’ quarters. Staff at Monticello make it clear through their tours, programs, publications, and web site that history is a continually evolving story and they are dedicated to research that will help contemporary people understand the complexities of Jefferson and his world.

Monticello’s reputation for interpreting slavery has not always been so good. Only twenty years ago, guides referred to enslaved people as “servants,” discussed Jefferson in the active voice and described the actions of slaves in the passive voice.

Staff did not suggest the possibility that Jefferson had fathered the children of Sally Hemings. In 1993, Monticello staff started giving “plantation tours.” Historical and archaeological research revealed the remains of the plantation’s slave village, and with the assistance of university and public historians, staff began to take a more scholarly approach to their interpretation of slavery.⁹³ Visitors to Monticello today are more likely to hear about Jefferson’s slaves on their tour and have several opportunities to learn more while on site.

The guided tour of the main house begins at the front door and includes only the main floor.⁹⁴ Upon entering visitors find themselves in Jefferson’s Indian Hall. At the time of my visit, Monticello was celebrating the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition; therefore, discussion of the artifacts in this room was heavily influenced by that event. The guide mentioned that a slave, Burwell Colbert, greeted visitors at the front door and asked them to wait in the Indian Hall. The tour progressed through the study, the library, Jefferson’s office, bedroom, parlor, dining room and guest room. Throughout the tour, the guide pointed out examples of Jefferson’s ingenuity in creating various gadgets, elements of his architectural style, and his voracious appetite for knowledge.

However, the guide did not neglect the activities of the enslaved residents of Monticello during the tour. In the first intimate family space, the study, she pointed out a copy of the Declaration of Independence hanging on the wall, and immediately addressed the contradictory issue of Jefferson’s role in obtaining freedom for white Americans while remaining a slaveholder. In particular, she noted matter-of-factly, that it was very likely that Jefferson was the father of his slave Sally Hemings’ children. Throughout the

tour she called attention to the craftsmanship of [Sally's father] John Hemings, a Monticello slave who made some of Jefferson's mahogany furniture. In the dining room, Edith Fawcett, a slave trained in French cooking, served the formal meals. Jefferson was concerned about privacy while having his meal, and was particularly worried that political conversations overheard by slaves would be repeated to those at other plantations. Jefferson trusted only his butler, Burwell Colbert, to be present at mealtime. In the past, Monticello guides discussed Jefferson's activities in the active voice and slave actions in the passive voice. This was not the case during my visit.

The guide of the tour I went on was very knowledgeable and integrated information about the work and lives of slaves into a story that depicted the complexity of Thomas Jefferson as an autodidact, statesman, politician, and slave owner. However, like any guided house tour, Monticello's most likely vary according to presenter. Since the quality of the guide makes such an impact on the visitor's experience, each group may learn more or less than the last one about Jefferson and the enslaved people at Monticello.

After completing the guided house tour, visitors have the opportunity to take self-guided tours of the rooms in the all-weather passageway, the gardens, and Mulberry Row. A small room in the all-weather passageway houses an exhibit about Monticello slaves [Figures B-72 and B-73]. Photographs document the architecture and lifestyles of the enslaved. Cases display artifacts retrieved during archaeological excavations of root cellars and the sites of slave cabins. Most objects are pieced-together mugs, plates, and bowls and other utilitarian items. The exhibit has little interpretative content and appears to have been in place for some time. The all-weather passageway also leads to the

restored kitchen [Figure B-74]. The cook's room has been furnished simply based on the study of Jefferson's records and other primary sources and is complemented by an informative series of "reading rail" panels [Figure B-75 and B-76]. A photograph of the cook's husband, Joseph Fossett, accompanies a relatively detailed biography, which illustrates the depth of knowledge available about some of Monticello's slaves.

Touchable squares of cloth provide visitors with a tactile experience of the clothing and blankets used by the slaves. A small display of personal items and their labels note the use of leisure time and the pursuit of literacy: "Despite working from dawn to dusk for their owners and at night for themselves and their families, enslaved people found time for marbles, dominoes, and other games. Slate pencils and writing slates were among the tools slaves used in learning to read and write. Many Monticello slaves, including some of the Fossetts, were literate as a result of their own efforts." While it would be easy to limit interpretation of Edith Fossett to describing the food she prepared and how she did her job, Monticello opts for a more complete representation. Together, the kitchen and the cook's room provide visitors with a well-rounded picture of Edith Fossett's life at Monticello: her place of work, a biography of her husband and names of her children, the type of clothing she might have worn, and the way she, her family, and other enslaved persons at the plantation educated themselves and spent their precious leisure time.

Visitors also have the opportunity to tour "Mulberry Row," the former location of slave cabins and work buildings [Figure B-77]. Between April and October, plantation tours are offered hourly between 10:00 and 3:00. Unfortunately, my visit was a week or two before the tours resumed, which gave me an appreciation of the problems with such segregated knowledge. Visitors unable to take the special tour may take a self-guided

tour of Mulberry Row, aided by interpretive markers in front of each site and a brochure that is densely packed with information. One side of the four-fold brochure is devoted to a map of the area with numbered sites interpreted around the perimeter. This series of buildings once included cabins for house slaves (referred to as “household servants”) and work buildings such as the smokehouse/dairy, blacksmith shop/nailery, and joinery. Some descriptions of these buildings employ the passive voice: “Here beef and pork were processed. . . .Milking at Monticello was mainly a summer activity.” There are also references to “skilled white” workmen, such as those who worked in the joinery. They passed their skills on to slaves, including John Hemings. These examples of symbolic annihilation may illustrate why Eichstedt and Small define it as “in-between.”

The opposite side of the brochure provides general information about Mulberry Row, its slave community and biographical sketches of slaves Isaac Jefferson, John Hemings, and the Hemings sisters. The brochure does address the conflicted nature of Jefferson’s views on slavery and acknowledges that he was a slaveholder all his life. He did outlaw the international slave trade to Virginia, but was unsuccessful in ending or restricting slavery. Jefferson did not believe a solution would be found in his lifetime, although he advocated resettling slaves outside of the United States. The text also acknowledges Jefferson’s paternalism in that he did not think freed slaves would be able to survive in a white world.

The biographical sketches of the two men, Isaac Jefferson and John Hemings, are described in the context of their work at Monticello. Both became skilled craftsmen, Isaac a blacksmith, tinsmith, and experienced worker in the nailery, and John a woodworker who built the log structures on Mulberry Row, made fine mahogany

furnishings, interior moldings, and wooden parts of Jefferson's carriage. The biographies indicate the men's high level of skill and suggest that their master appreciated their work.

The brochure also includes profiles of the Hemings sisters, including Sally.

Speculation that Sally Hemings was Jefferson's mistress and mother of as many as six children by him has existed since a newspaper first published the rumor in 1802, but the subject reached national headlines in 1998 when genetic testing among their descendents revealed a link between the pair. The Mulberry Row brochure recognizes that "historians generally accept the probability of a relationship that produced at least one and perhaps all of Sally Hemings' children listed in Jefferson's records." The widespread publicity of the Jefferson-Hemings DNA results most likely forced Monticello staff to accept the story as an important part of their interpretation. Thomas Jefferson Foundation president Daniel P. Jordan concurred with the research committee's support of the DNA and historical evidence indicating Jefferson's paternity of the Hemings children:

From the beginning, we have treated the Thomas Jefferson-Sally Hemings relationship as a research issue, and we will continue to do so. We believe it offers opportunities for the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, and that it will advance our firm belief in telling a story here that is accurate and honest—and thus inclusive—about Jefferson's remarkable life and legacy in the context of the complex and extraordinary plantation community that was Monticello.⁹⁵

The Jefferson-Hemings controversy most likely made Monticello's interpretation better. Due to the very public nature of the issue, interpreters were obliged to understand it and be willing to discuss it. Jordan also noted in his statement that they had "instructed our interpreters to initiate conversations with our visitors about the study." While my tour guide did bring the topic up without being asked, there wasn't really enough time for any discussion. When visitors asked more specific questions at the end of the tour, she answered them and recommended visiting Monticello's website, which has an extensive

section about the controversy. Visitor reaction has not been particularly intense, although there have been some instances of people leaving the tour before completion and comments about "revisionist history."⁹⁶

Monticello has advantages most historic houses do not. It has a research department that consists of academically trained scholars; several have published monographs on Jefferson topics through the Foundation, including two devoted to the stories of enslaved people at the site, and Jefferson and his life are studied by countless historians. As a result of its seemingly plentiful resources, Monticello should be held to a higher standard than the average historic house.

The major omission in the story told at Monticello is the presence of the field hands who were necessary for the farming operations. The brochure is clear that residences on Mulberry Row were for house slaves and some skilled workers. At no point did anyone explain where the field hands lived. Jefferson reportedly owned seventy slaves at Monticello at one point, not all of whom would have worked in the house or in the more skilled trades. Information about the people working the actual plantation is likely very scarce. However, ignoring them misses the important role of the plantation community, which could probably be generally reconstructed based on period evidence.

The successes and challenges of plantation sites are instructive for the house museum community as a whole. Eichstedt and Small make it clear that mentioning the existence of slaves is not as critical as how they are discussed, and the same is true about free domestic servants. Enslaved and free domestic servants deserve to have their actions described in the active voice. The owners of the house are discussed by name, so when servants' names are known, they should be treated the same way. Information about

domestic service is most effective when it is woven through the fabric of the overall interpretation instead of limited to servants' wings and outbuildings. Reinterpretation is more of a challenge than starting with inclusive interpretation on day one, so small steps are the only ones that some sites choose to take.

New House Museums, New Social History

Historic house museums opened within the past twenty to thirty years have perhaps had an easier time including information about servants, women, and African Americans. Patricia West noted that, "Staffs of historic house museums with established interpretive programs may find that old habits are hard to break. But because Lindenwald, Martin Van Buren's home, is a new museum, a 'blank slate,' if you will, it has been very easy to try new educational angles."⁹⁷ These *tabula rasas* teach important lessons about the interpretive potential of the historic house.

Walker's survey found that many historic house museums now include servants in their interpretation, but Lindenwald is one of the best-documented pioneers. Staff members have published at least three articles in the past fifteen years describing the site's approach to incorporating servants. The first, written by West in 1986, introduces the idea of incorporating social history into house museum interpretation. The bulk of the article is dedicated to advice about ways sites can conduct research to illuminate the lives of servants, ranging from site-related archival material to public documents such as the census. Other general primary sources like household manuals illustrate the way work was to be done or suggest the proper relationship between servants and employers. Household manuals are excellent resources, but they should be used carefully since they illustrate the ideal domestic situation. West does not explain how Lindenwald staff has

coped with the challenge of sensitive issues such as gender, race, and ethnicity, an unfortunate omission since it would provide readers with the most useful advice.⁹⁸

West published a more detailed article about domestic servants at Lindenwald in 1992.⁹⁹ Her article puts the site and its household staff in their historical contexts. She draws heavily from two significant social histories, Faye Dudden's *Serving Women* and Daniel Sutherland's *Americans and their Servants*, to describe the duties of servants at Lindenwald and in domestic service generally. She also includes the names and ages of the site's predominately Irish servant staff. Instead of providing advice for the house museum looking for ways to reinterpret their site, this essay introduces the servants at Lindenwald and their world. In doing so, it models the results of a successful research endeavor that can be the basis for interpretive programs.

Jim McKay and Gregg Berninger, rangers at Lindenwald, recently described the visitor's experience of domestic service in a one-page article in the NPS publication *Cultural Resource Management*.¹⁰⁰ Their article provides a walkthrough of five areas that deal directly with servants: the servants' dining room, kitchen, laundry room, cook's bedroom, and servant's staircase. In some of these areas, the focus is on particular tasks undertaken by the servants: putting a hand in the oven to gauge the temperature, or using the Italian ruffle iron to maintain President Van Buren's fancy clothing. Other areas speak to more personal issues relating to service: the pleasantness of the servants' dining room, where guides introduce the Irish servants and impact of the potato famine on American immigration; the cook's bedroom, conveniently located near the kitchen; or the eighty-eight step spiral staircase, which female servants wearing long skirts used many times a day to move items throughout the house.¹⁰¹ One major deficiency in the

presentation, however is a lack of detail about the servants as people and how they might have interacted with each other and their employers. Even using names of staff, their ages or ethnicities, while limited, would hint at the people behind the work, allowing them to become more than “the cook,” “the maid,” and so on. The author also neglects to mention how the duties and presence of servants may (and should) be interpreted in the family areas rather than limiting their stories to the servants’ wing. According to Walker’s criteria, the interpretation McKay and Berninger describe at Lindenwald would be considered limited since the primary focus is work.

Since 1980, several new historic houses have boldly addressed social history themes beyond the servants’ hall by expanding into the neighborhoods inhabited by working and middle-class people and immigrants. The most prominent and dynamic of these new socially relevant house museums is New York City’s Lower East Side Tenement Museum. Chartered in 1988, the museum’s mission is “to promote tolerance and historical perspective through the presentation and interpretation of the variety of immigrant and migrant experiences on Manhattan’s Lower East Side, a gateway to America.”¹⁰² The Lower East Side Tenement Museum is housed in a five-story tenement built in 1863 at 97 Orchard Street. Between 1863 and 1935 it was home to approximately 7,000 people from twenty countries. The lives of four families are currently interpreted: the German Jewish Gumpertz family (1870s), the Eastern European Jewish Rogarshevsky family (1900s), the Italian Catholic Baldizzi family (1930s) and the Confinos, a Sephardic Jewish family from Turkey (1916). In addition to guided tours of these families’ tenement apartments, the museum offers special programs to involve the community and to take an active role in current affairs.¹⁰³

The museum's web site provides a glimpse at the information that may be experienced on a tour of the tenement. The featured essays are grounded in social history, placing each family in their historical contexts. Selections from "A Tenement Story" (a book available for purchase on site) provide biographical sketches of the families currently interpreted at the museum. Visitors click hypertext links for additional information about topics such as handpumps and outhouses, the European Exodus, child labor, and tuberculosis. Other essays have discussed the museums' wallpaper excavation and the role of wallpaper in the lives of the tenants, and the 1901 Tenement House Act, which had a major impact on changes made to the building. The image the museum projects about itself through its website is of a site that takes social history seriously and one that is not afraid to address issues such as disease, sanitation, and child labor. The staff's confidence about the importance of their site and their ability to deliver an accurate and engaging interpretation drives their presentation.

Reviewers of the museum's interpretive tour have been generally complimentary. However, they have also claimed that despite the museum's serious concern for social history, the tenements' stories are perhaps a little sanitized, as noted by Margaret Garb in her review of the Tenement Museum for the *Journal of Urban History*:

The museum offers a stunning and informative portrait of tenement life, but standing in the clean, cheerful rooms of the carefully restored tenement, it is sometimes hard to remember that the hopeless faces that peered out of Riis's photographs might have moved through this building. The bed sheets are just a bit too clean and well preserved; there is no sign of the coal dust that must have blanketed tables and chairs in the 1870s. And in the guide's efforts to render the sense of community and of cultural cohesion, we lose sight of the loneliness and desperation that must also have been present. But these are minor quibbles about an otherwise extraordinary museum.¹⁰⁴

In all fairness, there are some aspects of tenement life that are impossible to depict accurately due to modern health codes and other regulations. In his column "The Abusable Past," R. J. Lambrose asked whether the museum would "install backyard privies, . . . and then clog them? Will it supply tubercular interpreters to work the sewing machines . . .?"¹⁰⁵ While these and other situations would be impossible to recreate, visitors do pass hallway bathrooms added in 1905 to comply with the Tenement Act, complete with torn newspaper hanging above the seats for use as toilet paper.

Tuberculosis and the treatment known as "cupping" are discussed in the Rogarshevsky apartment, which is interpreted in the context of Abraham Rogarshevsky's death from tuberculosis and the subsequent Jewish mourning ritual of sitting shiva.¹⁰⁶ Although the museum does not provide the "time travel" experience that Lambrose describes, the fact that sanitation and disease are even discussed is a major step in the right direction for house museums.

In addition to interpreting the immigrant experience of the past, the museum offers programs that focus on their contemporary counterparts. In 1996, the staff hosted a roundtable discussion by immigrants to New York City of various ages and backgrounds. The participants discussed the expectations they had of the city and the successes and disappointments that resulted from their migration. Ruth Abram, executive director of the museum, noted that that program "gives us the opportunity to draw a connection between the immigration saga of the past, which we are interpreting, and the ongoing."¹⁰⁷ Many of the participants made these connections as they viewed the apartments, remarking that the issues of immigration had changed little. The museum

has also offered walking tours of adjacent neighborhoods to further make connections between past and present immigration.

The Tenement Museum also offers assistance of various kinds to new immigrants. The staff holds classes in English for Speakers of Other Languages and use primary source documents in the curriculum. This class also generated the *Immigrant Resource Guide*, a free publication available in several languages that contains stories of immigrants past and present, names of organizations that assist them, and answers to common questions.¹⁰⁸ The Lower East Side Tenement Museum has created dynamic programs that take the role of museums to a further level, not only interpreting the past, but playing an active role in creating knowledgeable citizens and empowering immigrants in the present.

The topics addressed at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum could be part of any house museum tour, and their success is proof that museum audiences are receptive to them. Mansions had bathrooms; their residents got sick; and the many immigrants who lived the servants' quarters brought their own ethnic traditions into the homes of upper-class Anglo-Americans. While visitors may not come expecting such stories, house museum staff may be surprised to find that the humanity depicted by these everyday subjects is of great interest. In his review of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum for the *Journal of American History*, Charles Hardy III noted that "By crossing the boundaries of ethnicity and class, public and private, past and present, the museum has the potential, as Gary Kulick wrote in his 1992 report to the AAM, 'to be not just another museum, but to be part of a watershed moment in the history of museums.'"¹⁰⁹

The museum's active role in its community makes it a model site not just for interpreting diversity but also as an advocate for social action.

The Lower East Side Tenement Museum is one of the best examples of how social history has influenced historic preservation and provided a method for depicting historic houses as complex places where race, ethnicity, class, and gender intersect. The interpretation of free domestic servants and enslaved people has made significant progress over the past twenty to thirty years, but more evidence is needed to determine where and how this interpretation is successful.

Notes

¹ Rex M. Ellis, "Interpreting the Whole House," in *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, ed. Jessica Foy Donnelly (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 63.

² George W. McDaniel, "The Practice of Public History at Historic Houses and Buildings: Connecting Past, Present, and Future," in *Public History: Essays from the Field*, ed. James B. Gardner and Peter S. LaPaglia (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Co., 1999), 234.

³ Donnelly, 3.

⁴ Max A. van Balgooy, Director of Interpretation and Education, National Trust for Historic Preservation, "RE: House Museum Statistics," 4 June 2003, personal email (4 June 2003). According to Mr. van Balgooy, efforts are being made to gather statistics on historic houses and sites, although logistics and funding have been setbacks.

⁵ The directory includes the following information for most house museums (some sites did not provide information for all categories): Official full name, address, telephone and fax numbers, email and web site addresses, governing authority, annual budget, staff (full- and part-time, both paid and volunteer), annual visitation, annual events and programs, date the house was built, date(s) of major alterations to the structure, architectural style and architect's name, additional buildings, primary interpretive period and themes, date and style of interior furnishings, brief description of artifact and archival collections, historical significance of the site and/or its residents, times open to the public, rental availability, presence of on-site food service and museums store. Patricia Chambers Walker and Thomas Graham, eds., *Directory of Historic House Museums in the United States* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2000).

⁶ Walker and Graham, ix.

⁷ According to this index, 28 sites list African-American history as an interpretive theme, 31 sites include immigrant history, and working and middle-class lifestyles are covered by 57 sites. Twenty-two sites indicate "servant life" as a primary interpretive theme.

⁸ Svetlana Alpers, "The Museum as a Way of Seeing," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 26.

⁹ Karen Zukowski, "The Importance of Context," in *Conservation in Context: Finding a Balance for the Historic House Museum*, ed. Wendy Claire Jessup (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1995), 17.

¹⁰ As James Deetz, anthropologist and former assistant director of Plimoth Plantation, has put it, "A number of 'period rooms' placed together under a single roof make up a historic house." James Deetz, "A Sense of Another World: History Museums and

Cultural Change,” in *A Living History Reader, Vol. 1*, ed. Jay Anderson (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History, 1991), 121.

¹¹ Donnelly, 5.

¹² Thomas J. Schlereth, *Artifacts and the American Past* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1996), 115.

¹³ Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., *Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States Before Williamsburg* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), 112.

¹⁴ Cunningham used the moniker “A Southern Matron” in her “Appeal to Ladies of the South,” in which she advocated saving the home and tomb of George Washington. This letter was published in newspapers throughout the South. Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), 7.

¹⁵ Ann Pamela Cunningham, “An Appeal for Mount Vernon by the Mount Vernon Association of the Union,” *Washington Circular*, 24 November 1854, MVLA Archives. Quoted in West, *Domesticating History*, 10.

¹⁶ Patrick H. Butler III, “Past, Present, and Future: The Place of the House Museum in the Museum Community,” in *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, ed. Jessica Foy Donnelly (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 22.

¹⁷ Howe, 17.

¹⁸ West, 43.

¹⁹ Hosmer, 71.

²⁰ Hosmer, 138, 299.

²¹ West, 72-73.

²² The Orchard House web site describes Louisa May Alcott as “Jo in Little Women, well-known author and advocate for social reform.” Louisa May Alcott Memorial Association, Orchard House Web Site, “Learn More About the Alcotts and Orchard House,” <<http://www.louisamayalcott.org/alcottorchard.html>> (30 July 2003).

²³ Edward P. Alexander, *The Museum in America: Innovators and Pioneers* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1997), 106.

²⁴ Hosmer, 243, 254.

²⁵ William H. Truettner and Thomas Andrew Denenberg, "The Discreet Charm of the Colonial," in *Picturing Old New England: Image and Memory*, ed. William H. Truettner and Roger B. Stein (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 89-90. SPNEA recently changed the name of the organization to "Historic New England."

²⁶ Hosmer, 471.

²⁷ Ron Thompson and Marilyn Harper, "Telling the Stories: Planning Effective Interpretive Programs for Properties Listed in the National Register of Historic Places", *National Register Bulletin* (2000)

<<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/interp/int2.htm>> (31 July 2003).

²⁸ Butler, 26. Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 460-461, 468-469.

²⁹ Hosmer, 573.

³⁰ Hosmer, 565.

³¹ In session at the AASLH's 2004 Annual Meeting, "New Uses for Old Houses: Rethinking the Historic House Museum," Barbara Silberman and Donna Harris described the results of such an overabundance in Philadelphia, which has 200 house museums in its metro area. The intensity of the competition leads to small attendance for many sites, most of which are not endowed, hence, inadequate resources for necessary maintenance and programming.

³² Elizabeth D. Mulloy, *The History of the National Trust for Historic Preservation* (Washington D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1976), 12. Today, the Trust does not have any federal government affiliation and receives no federal monies. It operates as a private non-profit organization.

³³ Diane Barthel, *Historic Preservation: Collective Memory and Historic Identity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 6.

³⁴ Their 1996 National Conference provided the first social gathering for gay and lesbian preservationists. Field sessions at recent conferences and articles in the Trust's publication *Preservation* have highlighted gay and lesbian landmarks and neighborhoods. Gail Lee Dubrow, "Blazing Trails with Pink Triangles and Rainbow Flags: Improving the Preservation and Interpretation of Gay and Lesbian Heritage," in *Interpreting Women's History through Historic Preservation*, ed. Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 284-285.

³⁵ For example, the interpretive themes of the First Home of President William J. Clinton in Hope, Arkansas include: "A young boy of a single mother in the rural south can

achieve the American dream to become President of the United States.” Walker and Graham, 15.

³⁶ Patricia West, “‘The New Social History’ and Historic House Museums: The Lindenwald Example,” *Museum Studies Journal* 2 (Fall 1986): 22.

³⁷ Sherry Butcher-Youngans, *Historic House Museums: A Practical Handbook for their Care, Preservation, and Management* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 188, 184.

³⁸ Barbara Abramoff Levy, Sandra Mackenzie Lloyd, and Susan Porter Schrieber, *Great Tours! Thematic Tours and Guide Training for Historic Sites* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001); Jessica Foy Donnelly, ed., *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002).

³⁹ “Telling the Stories,” np.

⁴⁰ Polly Welts Kaufman and Katherine T. Corbett, ed., *Her Past Around Us: Interpreting Sites for Women’s History* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 2003); Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman, ed., *Restoring Women’s History through Historic Preservation* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

⁴¹ These scholars included Jane C. Nylander, author of *Our Own Snug Fireside: Images of the New England Home, 1760-1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993); Faye E. Dudden, author of *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1983); Jacqueline Jones, author of *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Phyllis Palmer, author of *Domesticity and Dirt: Housewives and Domestic Servants in the United States, 1920-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); and Judith Rollins, author of *Between Women: Domesticity and their Employers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985).

⁴² Barbara A. Levy and Susan Schreiber, “The View from the Kitchen,” *History News* 50, no. 2 (March/April 1995): 19.

⁴³ Jane Brown Gillette, “Breaking the Silence,” *Historic Preservation*, March/April 1995, 42.

⁴⁴ Gillette; Barbara A. Levy and Susan Schreiber, “The View from the Kitchen,” 16-20.

⁴⁵ Patricia Chambers Walker, “A More Complete History: Interpreting Domestic Servants at Historic House Museums,” (M. A. thesis, John F. Kennedy University, 1996), 63-4. Her survey focused on house museums interpreted as single-family homes not part of museum villages.

⁴⁶ Walker, 66.

⁴⁷ 57.9 percent interpreted free servants, 15.8 enslaved servants, and 26.3 both free and enslaved (which Walker refers to as “combination” sites). Walker, 109.

⁴⁸ Walker, 117-18, 120-21.

⁴⁹ Walker, 122-23.

⁵⁰ Walker, 195.

⁵¹ Walker, 196-97.

⁵² Walker, 145-148; 190-92.

⁵³ When broken down into type of site, 28.7 percent of those interpreting free servants rated limited information as “very challenging,” whereas, more slavery and combination sites rated this factor as “very challenging,” 53.1 percent and 43.2 percent respectively. Walker, 145-47.

⁵⁴ 24.6 percent of free sites rated lack of artifacts “very challenging,” versus 42.2 percent of slave sites and 41.7 percent of combination sites. Walker, 159.

⁵⁵ Walker, 153-54.

⁵⁶ 85.5 percent of all respondents faced no opposition to interpreting domestic servants. When broken down according to type of site, 71.7 percent of sites exclusively interpreting enslaved people encountered resistance, compared to 72.9 percent at combination sites, and 94.8 percent at free sites. Walker, 133-134.

⁵⁷ Walker, 135-136.

⁵⁸ Walker, 137.

⁵⁹ 25 percent of slave sites indicated employer/servant conflict as a theme compared to 11.9 percent of free sites. In terms of conflict between servants, 9.4 percent of slave sites cited it as part of their interpretation, while only 4.5 percent of free sites did. Walker, 198.

⁶⁰ Walker, 186-187.

⁶¹ Walker, 184.

⁶² I often describe the relationship between Irene Douglas and Ella McDannel (the nanny, and later a maid), one that was by all accounts amicable, as being like the friendship one

might have with their boss or supervisor. Regardless of any fondness that grows between the two, sometimes the boss has to be the boss.

⁶³ Walker, 111-113.

⁶⁴ 53.1 percent and 28.7 percent, respectively. Walker, 146-147; 158-159.

⁶⁵ Walker, 141.

⁶⁶ Walker, 141-142.

⁶⁷ James Oliver Horton, "Presenting Slavery: The Perils of Telling America's Racial Story," *The Public Historian* 21, no. 4 (Fall 1999): 20-21.

⁶⁸ Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 10.

⁶⁹ Eichstedt and Small, 4.

⁷⁰ Eichstedt and Small, 107-108.

⁷¹ Eichstedt and Small, 108-109.

⁷² M. S. Durham, "The word is 'slaves,'" *American Heritage*, April 1992, *Academic Search Elite*, EBSCOhost.

⁷³ Eichstedt and Small, 113-120.

⁷⁴ Eichstedt and Small, 127-129.

⁷⁵ Adam Goodheart, "The Bonds of History," *Preservation*, September/October 2001, 36-38.

⁷⁶ James Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York: The New Press, 1999), 339. Loewen also makes several references to the use of passive voice when describing the work of slaves.

⁷⁷ Eichstedt and Small, 147-149.

⁷⁸ Eichstedt and Small, 149.

⁷⁹ Eichstedt and Small, 151.

⁸⁰ Loewen, 341.

⁸¹ Eichstedt and Small, 154.

⁸² Mrs. James [Sallie May] Dooley, *Dem Good Ole Times* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1906).

⁸³ Eichstedt and Small, 161-163.

⁸⁴ Eichstedt and Small, 166-167.

⁸⁵ Eichstedt and Small, 170.

⁸⁶ Eichstedt and Small, 174-175.

⁸⁷ Eichstedt and Small, 201.

⁸⁸ Horton, 28.

⁸⁹ Eichstedt and Small, 204.

⁹⁰ Quoted by Eichstedt and Small, 215.

⁹¹ The narration includes the following: "It's hard today to put ourselves in the mind of a man like Madison. He condemned what he called 'the original sin of slavery.' A few of his friends and family members, acting on similar beliefs, freed their slaves. Madison, whose comfortable existence at Montpelier depended on slave labor, did not. By all accounts, he was a humane master. But the philosopher-statesman who fought to create a government of free men remained a slave owner his whole life." Eichstedt and Small, 218.

⁹² Eichstedt and Small, 203.

⁹³ Horton, 33-34.

⁹⁴ The majority of the information on Monticello is based on field notes taken during my visit on 16 March 2003.

⁹⁵ Daniel P. Jordan, "Statement on the TJF Research Committee Report on Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, 26 January 2000, <<http://www.monticello.org/plantation/hemingscontro/reportstatement.html>> (30 July 2003).

⁹⁶ Horton, 35.

⁹⁷ Patricia West, "'The New Social History' and Historic House Museums," 22.

⁹⁸ West, 23.

⁹⁹ Patricia West, "Irish Immigrant Workers in Antebellum New York: The Experience of Domestic Servants at Van Buren's Lindenwald" *Hudson Valley Regional Review* 9, no. 2 (1992): 112-126.

¹⁰⁰ Jim McKay and Gregg Berninger, "Interpreting Servants at the Martin Van Buren NHS" *Cultural Resource Management* 20, no.3 (1997): 48.

¹⁰¹ McKay and Berninger, 48.

¹⁰² Lower East Side Tenement Museum, "About Us," <<http://www.tenement.org/about.html>> (22 June 2001).

¹⁰³ In January 2001, the *Village Voice* reported that an apartment salesman convicted of harassing a community board member had been sentenced to do community service at the Tenement Museum. Renee Epps, the museum's vice president for properties and administration commented, "If being at the museum furthers his sense of tolerance and the historical nature of the neighborhood, that's good . . . We are an educational institution, and if he learns something, that's our mission." "A Sentence Laden With Irony," *Village Voice* 46:4 (30 January 2001): 38.

¹⁰⁴ Margaret Garb, "Lower East Side Tenement Museum," *Journal of Urban History* 26, no. 1 (November 1999): 111.

¹⁰⁵ R. J. Lambrose, "East Side Story" in "The Abusable Past," *Radical History Review* 43 (January 1989): 143.

¹⁰⁶ Garb, 109,110.

¹⁰⁷ Somini Sengupta, "Immigrants Tell Their New York Stories," *New York Times*, Late Edition – Final, 6 May 1996, B2.

¹⁰⁸ Ruth J. Abram, "Harnessing the Power of History," in *Museums, Society, Inequality*, ed. Richard Sandell (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 136.

¹⁰⁹ Charles Hardy III, "Exhibition Reviews: The Lower East Side Tenement Museum" *Journal of American History* 84, no. 3 (December 1997): 1013.

CHAPTER FOUR
SURVEY OF HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUMS AND INTERPRETATION OF
DOMESTIC SERVANTS

My initial inquiry into the broader impact of social history on historic house museum interpretation supports the argument that efforts to incorporate race, gender, and class have intensified in recent years and that including domestic servants in house museum tours has become relatively common. However, these developments raise further questions about how material about servants is presented and received “on the ground.” Having worked in a historic house museum for six years, I know well that programs that sound good on paper and at workshops often perform much differently and usually require revising and retooling before they are effective with visitors. Thus, I needed to supplement the ruminations of scholars in books and articles by soliciting direct testimony about domestic service interpretation from others responsible for developing this material and overseeing its use. To collect information from a broad spectrum of house museums in terms of geography and staff size, I conducted a nationwide mail survey of house museums that interpret periods after 1865. I also visited several house museums, generally representing the same interpretive periods, to assess first-hand the influence of the new social history on these institutions. Thus, I assembled a quantitative and qualitative assessment to refine what has commonly been only anecdotal information shared through informal networks.

One specific and substantial piece of missing information has been statistics that define house museums according to staff size (paid and volunteer), annual budget, attendance, and types of programs offered to the public. House museums and historic

sites could benefit from a comprehensive nationwide collection of this data. The exact number of historic sites (which includes houses and non-residential buildings) is not known, even to the professional organizations, although 6000 is the most recent estimate. The sheer number of historic sites open to the public gives them great potential to influence the ways Americans learn history or where they go to study it. A quantitative study of historic sites, especially house museums, might shed additional light on how these institutions play a part in American relationships with history. While my study represents only a fraction of the whole, it is a good starting point in the effort to better understand how a specific category of museums interprets history and to suggest ways that they can improve their effectiveness.

Three earlier surveys provided a foundation for the questionnaire I circulated. In 1989, the American Association of Museums (AAM) conducted a survey of all museums, from zoos to historic sites to art museums. The result was an impressive collection of data about annual budgets and finances, governance, age of the institutions, general descriptions of collections, visitation, facilities, and human resources.¹ The survey report's title, *Museums Count*, is a pun on its numerical contents and its argument that museums enrich individuals, their communities, and the nation as a whole. The AAM survey influenced some questions I asked in my survey, particularly about the age of institutions, percentages of paid and volunteer staff, and the content of collections.

The AAM survey included house museums in the larger category of historic sites, with which they have much in common. As this larger survey was underway, Peggy Coats of the Campbell House in California attempted to define the basic characteristics of house museums as a subsection of the museum community. She gathered information

about personnel and financial resources, annual visitation, and the services that house museums provided their constituents. Her sample size was very small, but she concluded that house museums offer many services to the public despite being understaffed and underfunded (although one would be hard pressed to find many museums not in this situation).² Coats did not address interpretive issues, which were my main concern, but her survey did suggest that insufficient resources, in part, explained the slow progress of social history at historic house museums. She published the results of her survey in *History News*, the magazine of the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH), and was thus able to reach a large audience of colleagues. Coats' survey offered an example to follow and a reference point for my study nearly fifteen years later.

Patricia Chambers Walker's thesis, "A More Complete History: Interpreting Domestic Servants at Historic House Museums," provided the first quantitative study of the interpretation of domestic service, and served as an important resource for my survey. She discovered that while the majority of house museums include information about servants on their tours, fewer interpret domestic service beyond their work duties. Another important component of Walker's survey concerned the challenges museums face when developing new interpretive themes, like domestic service. In the conclusion of her survey analysis, Walker suggested the questions that her survey unearthed that could be investigated in further study of the topic, namely, "whether the realities of life in service are being explored; the long hours, hard work, isolation and the tensions inherent in being part of the household and yet not part of the family," and "the interpretation of ethnicity and the relationships between servant and employer."³ I thus hoped to build

upon Walker's foundation by gathering specific information relative to the presence of these issues.

While Walker's survey included sites interpreting all historical periods, I limited mine to post-Civil War interpretation. In doing so, I created a sample that would share specific historical contexts. My own research on domestic service focuses on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which motivated the decision to narrow my field according to time period. Some of the issues I selected to address as topics of significance to house museum interpretation (questions 14-16) are influenced by post-Civil War developments, such as the use of domestic technology, the "servant problem," and ethnicity, which saw regional changes during this period of "new" immigration and the Great Migration.

In addition to building on the social history themes suggested in Walker's study, I also wanted to investigate the presence of artifacts and archival materials related to servants. Walker found that among the most frequently cited reasons for not interpreting domestic service was lack of archival information and artifacts relevant to domestic servants. Anyone familiar with researching a site's domestic servants encounters many gaps in family and public documents. Most families whose homes have been opened to the public did not leave extensive collections of account books or other documents that typically identify servants. Given the transitory nature of domestic service, personal belongings of their employees normally did not remain among their employers' possessions. Furnishings for servants' rooms tended to be simple, inexpensive pieces that the house's owners did not see fit to keep, or that were discarded during the transition from private residence to public site. However, my site visits and personal experience

researching Brucemore's servants indicated that some house museums do have access to extraordinary materials, and those that don't may still manage to develop engaging ways to educate visitors about social and class divisions within the household. I hoped my survey would identify interpretive themes that could be adapted by house museums wishing to interpret domestic service. Understanding the materials that are typically available was particularly valuable to this effort.

The data from the three earlier surveys and my experiences with interpreting servants at Brucemore led to the big questions of my survey: given that domestic service is increasingly a part of house museum tours, how critically are the concerns of social history, particularly race, class, and gender, presented in this interpretation? Many sites have stated their intentions to create more accurate and diverse interpretations, but how many have been able to follow through with this goal? The potential exists for many sites to present an interpretation of domestic service that is rich in detail despite limited site-specific information. With some notable exceptions, themes focusing on race/ethnicity, class, and gender are not significant parts of house museum tours. Respondents offered many compelling reasons for their absence and recognize the importance of interpreting domestic servants. Given their perception of a high level of visitor interest in the topic, further refinement of this interpretive theme should be a goal for all house museums, and it may be achieved by developing a more sophisticated approach to interpreting the servants' work that is already a substantial part of most domestic service interpretation.

Survey Design and Method

These research questions became the foundation for a four-page mail questionnaire. I drew my survey population from Walker and Graham's *Directory of Historic House Museums in the United States*, which lists each house's interpretive period (if provided by respondents).⁴ I did not mail the survey to sites that clearly would not have had domestic servants, such as pioneer homesteads and log cabins. Surveys were addressed to the executive director (or the curator, in the case of very large institutions) except when prior contact with site personnel allowed me to address a specific person.⁵ Since most house museums are small operations, not all have organizational structures with the full-spectrum of specialists, like curators or educators; however, almost all have someone who acts as the executive director, despite variations in title. A cover letter describing my project and professional background accompanied a copy of the survey [Figures B-78 and B-79]. Before mailing, the questionnaire was reviewed for content, errors, and bias by one of the dissertation chairs, the executive director at Brucemore, and the Director of Interpretation and Education for the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

My survey yielded quality information from sites of all sizes and regions. Many respondents wrote detailed comments; some sent brochures, guide training material, and photographs or biographical information about their servants. In retrospect, I better understand the limitations of the survey and some of its questions. The choices provided for some questions should have included "unknown," a category I created during the coding process since many wrote it in. Some questions could have been more specific, such as the one that asked respondents to identify the ethnicities of servants. I included

as one choice “We do not know the ethnic backgrounds of any of the servants who worked at our site.” As I received completed surveys I realized that using “any” as a qualifier was too limiting. A better alternative would have been, “We do not know the ethnic backgrounds of all of the servants who worked at our site.” Some respondents crossed out “any” and wrote in “all,” and others marked the selection in addition to specific ethnicities. When compiling the data, I distinguished between sites that did not know the ethnicities of any of their servants and those who have some information about them.

One unexpected issue involves the respondents’ understanding of terminology.

At the beginning of the survey, I included the following definitions to clarify my use of these terms:

- The *standard tour* is the daily tour given to the average walk-in visitor.
- *Domestic servants* or *servants* are any person whose primary occupations are activities related to the care and comfort of their employers and their family, and cleaning and maintenance of their employer’s home and its contents. This includes such persons as those engaged in personal service (butlers, lady’s maids), housekeeping and cleaning, food preparation and serving, and childcare.

Identifying the meaning of the term “standard tour” seems to have helped since many respondents did differentiate material about servants that was presented only during special tours or programs. The word “servant,” however, did result in some isolated cases of sensitivity:

I would say very little is pertinent to our area—no one here would ever have considered themselves “servants”—day laborers, yes—wage earners, yes—“maid” – perhaps; housekeeper, yes. However, many old timers today served wealthier residents and retirees.

Unsure of definition—I’m unsure what this lady did as her main occupation, whether she cleaned house for a variety of people or whether she just did this a little on the side, etc.

“Maids” and “chauffeurs” in our town were not really servants.

[It] would probably be better to refer to them as workers not servants. They were treated as employees and not in the typical manner of domestic servants at the time. They were helpers of a man with a large house and were not seen as beneath him or his guests.

The term “servant” was problematic during the historical periods in question, and evidently modern guides and visitors still struggle with its connotations. Many American-born women objected to the term and were sensitive to the stigma it carried in society. The word has slightly different baggage in the South. At antebellum plantations, tour guides often refer to slaves euphemistically as servants. Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small identify this practice as a form of symbolic annihilation, but guides defend it as being more historically accurate because that was the word used by many masters. Eichstedt and Small refute the legitimacy of this claim by explaining that “the euphemism was used in the past because the reality of the situation was too ugly to be directly faced; this does not seem like a good reason to continue its use today.”⁶ Walker also noted isolated examples of discomfort with the word “servant;” one respondent noted that former servants still living are ““sensitive to being labeled as servants.””⁷

Another phrase that some respondents may have found unfamiliar is the “servant problem.” As the first chapter illustrated, women frequently used this phrase to describe their difficulty hiring and keeping good servants. This item had the highest number of “no answer” responses in the section of rated topics. If the phrase had been defined, it might have been skipped less often and generated some written comments.

The survey included some questions in which additional detail is requested, usually indented and labeled by a lower-case letter. These were some of the most

frequently unanswered questions, perhaps because they were not visually prominent. In particular, 7a (“Which of the above [interpretive] methods are used to interpret domestic servants?”) and 34a (“Which of the above [circumstances] is the primary reason for not interpreting servants?) were regularly skipped.

Avoiding bias was a major concern as I drafted the questionnaire, and I tried to avoid language that might indicate positive or negative connotations. One respondent, though, suggested that specific information was expected: “Perhaps I am reading too much into the phrasing of the questions or perhaps because the [family’s] relations with their domestic help were cordial, I feel that it is the expectation of the survey that we will have a contentious master/slave situations. None of our research has turned up such material.”

Survey Results

In June 2003, I mailed 691 questionnaires to historic house museums in all but two states.⁸ I received 358 completed surveys, a preliminary response rate of 51.8 percent. Twenty-two surveys were returned as undeliverable, making the final response rate 53.5 percent. To encourage candid responses, I guaranteed that any comments included in the dissertation would only be identified by state or region. I divided the returned surveys into the following regional categories, based on those used in the 1900 census aggregate statistics. These regions were manageable to work with as well as being relatively consistent in terms of geography, settlement, and immigration patterns [Table A-2].

New England: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

Southern North Atlantic: New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania

Northern South Atlantic: Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia

Southern North Atlantic: Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina
Eastern North Central: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin
Western North Central: Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North
 Dakota, South Dakota
Eastern South Central: Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee
Western South Central: Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas
Rocky Mountain: Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming
Basin and Plateau: Arizona, Utah
Pacific: California, Oregon, Washington
Non-contiguous: Hawaii, Alaska

Only two regions had response rates lower than 50 percent, the Eastern South Central (33.3 percent) and the non-contiguous states (44.4 percent). Many individual states had response rates between 60 and 100 percent.

I organized the survey to gather four categories of information: the makeup of the site's current personnel, its servants (number, positions, ethnic background), the interpretation of servants, and reasons for not interpreting domestic servants. The first section, "Your Site," was to collect basic information about house museum staff size and employment status (full- or part-time, paid or volunteer), age of institutions, and interpretive themes. The information I received provides a rich overview of the sample's basic resources.

Not all respondents provided all of the requested information in this first section. The most commonly skipped categories were the number of full-time seasonal employees, part-time seasonal employees, and full-time volunteers. Since these particular types of personnel are relatively uncommon, leaving these spaces blank may be an indication that they were not present. However, to avoid making inaccurate assumptions, I did not assign these answers a zero, but rather "no answer." Governance was also difficult to determine because respondents often identified the name of their

organization, which did not always clearly indicate whether the site was operated by a private non-profit corporation, a co-stewardship agreement, or a government agency.

One new piece of information I hoped to collect was the year that the sites opened to the public. Writing about interpreting servants at Lindenwald, Patricia West in 1986 stated that because it was a new institution, its curators began with a blank slate. The 1989 AAM survey indicated significant growth in the number of historic sites and history museums with 60 percent of the former being established since 1960.⁹ This trend appears within the house museum community as well. Over one-fourth (27.7 percent) of sites responding to this question opened between 1970 and 1979, the most frequently cited year being 1976 (thirteen opened that year). Preservation of historic houses likely benefited from the enthusiasm generated by Bicentennial celebrations.¹⁰ Over half (56.3 percent) opened in the post-Civil Rights era (1970 and after). It is reasonable to assume that these institutions would be more sensitive to more diverse approach to interpretation, and their staff likely exposed to social history as college students. However, given the fact that greatest number opened during the bicentennial decade, it is equally likely that many founders had celebratory goals in mind. A later question that addresses when sites began interpreting domestic service indicates that the most significant periods for the integration of servants' stories were the 1980s and 1990s.

Staff size is frequently cited as a hindrance to including more information about domestic service. Most sites have few paid or volunteer staff with the time to devote to the requisite research. Coats' found that 72 percent of institutions had on average fewer than two full-time staff.¹¹ The respondents to my survey reported a range from zero to 250 full-time employees; 17.9 percent indicated they had no full-time paid staff.¹² The

median full-time staff size was 2, and the most frequent responses were one and two (each with fifty-eight). More than one-third (38.9 percent) of all sites have one to two full-time staff; nearly another third (30.4 percent) have between three and ten full-time staff, which suggests that average staff size has increased slightly since Coats' 1989 survey. Two-hundred-fifty-six respondents reported the size of their part-time staff, which ranges from zero to 200, with a median size of two and the most frequent response being one. Seventy-two percent of all respondents had four or fewer part-time staff. Thus, the average house museum has a total of one to four employees, full- and part-time. Even for a small site, this level of professional staffing is severely limiting, particularly during lean economic times when finding potential sources of income becomes even more crucial, and more effort must be put into securing funding.

As indicated in the previous chapter, volunteers have played a critical role since the beginning of the preservation movement. Like Ann Pamela Cunningham, many women and men fought to save landmark residences of local and national significance. Volunteers tend to be heavily involved with these house museums after they open to the public, either as paid or volunteer staff or as tour guides (interpreters). It is not an exaggeration to claim that without the work of volunteers, most house museums would have to close their doors or would not have opened them in the first place.

Respondents highlighted the importance of volunteers as a labor source and reported a range of involvement either full or part-time. Over two-thirds (69 percent) have no full-time volunteers, and 19 percent have one or two working in this capacity.¹³ A site run fully by volunteer workers has many challenges, the least pressing of which might be gathering information about domestic service. One respondent noted that their

site “is managed by volunteers and we lack the necessary guidance to present an interesting interpretation of domestic service.”

Part-time volunteers are often the backbone of historic house museums. Half of my respondents (50.3 percent) have twenty or fewer part-time volunteers, ranging from one to over one thousand.¹⁴ Sites with part-time volunteer staffs in the hundreds are not unusual, and tend to have bigger and more specialized professional staffs, gardens or large grounds, and/or host large special events or rentals. The number of hours put in by a volunteer can also vary greatly. Some are “regulars” who work a specific shift weekly, others do only seasonal work or particular tasks a handful of times a year. Of all staff and volunteer categories, more sites were likely to have at least one part-time volunteer than any other position. These large numbers of volunteers suggest a need for free labor, but also indicate public interest in these museums.

Guiding tours is one the most common volunteer jobs. Whether to use paid or volunteer guides has long been a subject of debate in house museum circles (some use both). Paid guide positions are usually low-wage and likely to draw college students (the seasonality of house museum visitation is convenient for students needing summer jobs), middle-class individuals looking to supplement their household income, and retirees. In their manual *Great Tours! Thematic Tours and Guide Training for Historic Sites*, Levy, Lloyd, and Schreiber highlight the advantages of paid guide staff. For example, they tend to work a more regular and frequent schedule than volunteers, which gives them more opportunity to hone their skills, connect with professional staff, and stay apprised of the latest site research. Paid guides are also more accountable, especially when changes are made to the interpretation.¹⁵ One disadvantage Levy, et. al. did not mention is that sites

who hire guides for seasonal help may not be able to retain them for the next season.¹⁶ Since volunteers are not paid and typically have long-standing relationships with the institution, it can be easier to keep them involved throughout the year.

Volunteer guides require more supervision and training, but they can also be very effective. They are more likely to be retirees and available during the workday; those with full-time jobs can only take weekend shifts. Many volunteers enjoy the opportunity to spend their free time in what are usually beautiful places where they are allowed special access. Some have specific interests in history, antiques, or other types of material culture. Their desire to give time and their typically passionate interest in the site can make volunteers successful guides. They are a self-selected group, so they usually enjoy working with the public. Some of the best are retired teachers who carry their classroom experience into their work with the public. Volunteer guides, who tend to be older women, have been stereotyped in the museum profession and beyond as “blue hairs,” “ladies in tennis shoes,” and similar demeaning caricatures. However, without their dedication, most museums would close their doors.

Working with volunteer guides is especially challenging when the professional staff modifies the interpretive material. While volunteers trained after the “change” have few problems, the habits of long-time volunteers (some likely to be “charter” volunteers given the number of house museums that have opened in the past thirty years) are more difficult to influence. Many continue to dwell on the way the house used to be (especially if restoration has occurred) and focus too heavily on how and why it was changed, a problem identified by some critics of Colonial Williamsburg, due to several interpretive overhauls during its seventy-year history. While I agree in principle with this

critique made by Handler, Gable, and others, they do not consider that these situations also provide opportunities to educate the public about preservation. Guides should be knowledgeable about the project and basic preservation issues to help steer them from the nostalgia to the interpretive benefits of the restoration.

Occasionally, guides are stubborn in their resistance to change. In the living history village of New Salem, Illinois, Edward Bruner encountered an example of resistance to changing interpretation. When site staff decided that the interpreters' period clothing should reflect class, a volunteer assigned to the home of a poor family was expected to don appropriate dress. However, "she was interested in clothing, had nice outfits of her own design, wanted to dress well, and wore what would be considered inappropriate 'rich' clothing."¹⁷ While survey respondents indicated that guides respond very well to including material about servants, one Midwestern respondent noted "Retraining volunteers—next to impossible" as a hindrance to interpretation of domestic service. Another respondent concurred: "We receive no city funding and it is a challenge just to find volunteer docents to keep the house open, much less to require docents to adhere to a specific interpretive plan. Many docents prefer the 'Great Man' approach to the owner's life, others are interested only in the aesthetic house (fine furnishings and architecture)."

A large majority of survey respondents had more volunteer guides than paid. 22.2 percent reported having no paid guides, while those that do have six or fewer (74.3 percent).¹⁸ Only one-fourth (26 percent) have paid guides exclusively, one-third (33.4 percent) have volunteer guides exclusively, and the remainder (37.7 percent) have both.¹⁹ Of the last category, 70 percent had more volunteer than paid guides. Historic house

museums depend considerably on the work of volunteer guides who provide their primary interpretive product. Only 2.9 percent had no guides, most likely relying on a self-guided tour. Since the guided tour is the essence of most visits to historic house museums, it is important for site staff to understand the strengths and limitations their guide staff may have regarding the interpretation of domestic service or other social history themes.

To close the questionnaire's first section, I asked respondents to share their sites' interpretive themes. Given the wide variety of people, places, and events connected with historic houses, the responses revealed a diverse array of subjects and themes. However, several trends did emerge. Many reflect the traditional or celebratory approaches to historic site interpretation: the lives of the owners or famous residents, arts and architecture, "upper-class" and "well-to-do" lifestyles, and specific periods (most often the Victorian or Gilded Ages). Other themes show evidence of social history's influence: local and state history, "everyday life," domestic life (including that of slaves and free servants), women's history/suffrage, and gender roles.

The information provided by respondents in the first section of the survey indicates a growing maturity in the historic house museum field. Personnel resources, although still very small, seem to have grown slightly in the past fifteen years. A large number of new historic house museums opened in the 1970s, and they have become more likely to have staff with advanced history degrees given the decline in academic jobs. Interpretive themes, while still traditional, are moving, like preservation, from the sacred to socially relevant.

Servant Presence at Historic Sites

The questionnaire's second section asked respondents to provide basic information about servants that had worked at their site and whether they had information about them. To build on Walker's findings, I added questions about the resources available for interpreting domestic service, the significance of specific servant-related themes in the standard tour, and guide and visitor reactions to servant material.²⁰ Four-fifths (80.1 percent) of the respondents reported the presence of servants during their interpretive periods.²¹ Only three regions had lower percentages, primarily in western and the non-contiguous states, a pattern consistent with the historical distribution of servants.²² Roughly one-third of respondents reported one to three servants, one-fifth between four and six, one-sixth (14.4 percent) seven to twenty, and a very small number of sites with more than twenty. That the greatest number had one to three servants reflects developments in the early twentieth century, when the average household with servants employed only one and occasionally two. The total percentage of all one-servant households was likely higher circa 1900 than that of my survey sample, since the type of homes traditionally preserved as museums tend to be those of wealthier families with larger servant staffs. The house museums in my survey, though, do represent a full range of sites that would have employed servants, and those with large staffs do not dominate my sample.

In multiple-servant households, each person performed specific duties according to his or her position within the backstairs hierarchy. Responses to question three regarding the types of specialized servants at each site continues to illustrate diversity among the responding sites, while remaining consistent with the overall distribution of

house museums according to staff size [Table A-3]. The most frequently employed servant was the cook, a common addition as middle-class families climbed the social ladder. Gardeners and maids-of-all-work were the second most common, followed by chauffeurs. Equally noteworthy is the list of "other" workers written in by respondents, which include relatively common servants like laundresses, seamstresses, housemen or handymen, and very specialized employees (not all of which were probably considered "servants") including tennis professionals, organists, security personnel, and animal caretakers.

Respondents were asked to describe their servants using a list of ethnic backgrounds representing the most common working in domestic service according to the 1900 census [Table A-4]. I provided the option of marking unknown or writing in other ethnicities. As suggested in chapter one, domestic servant populations differed regionally according to immigration patterns. Although the young Irish woman represented the stereotypical servant girl, this was the reality primarily in the Northeast. African Americans made up the majority of domestic servants in the South, Scandinavians and Germans in the Midwest, and Chinese and Japanese men in the Pacific coast states. In general, immigrants made up the majority of domestics regardless of their ethnic background, but awareness of prejudices against specific ethnicities or in certain regions is important for a more accurate depiction of the world the household was part of.

Walker's survey indicated a relatively high percentage of house museums interpreting domestic service, 81.8 percent of the 421 surveys that met her study's criteria. My research yielded similar results with 72.9 percent of respondents reporting some interpretation of domestic servants [Table A-5]. Modest regional differences did

emerge, particularly sites in the Midwestern and Plains states being less likely to interpret servants, while Northeastern and Pacific coast states' were more likely to do so. Some respondents marking "yes" for question six identified their interpretation of servants as limited or very general: "[Yes] but not in great detail, only as a reminder that they were present;" "We discuss slavery and describe the work of the house slaves but we don't focus very much on servants after the Civil War;" "It's not interpreted, but we show a maid's room and lightly mention other aspects. At Christmas it is stressed during a special open house;" "Mention is made of servant areas in the house. No great deal is given on standard tour;" "It is not stressed, but if guests inquire we tell them;" "Minimal—there is mention of where the servants' quarters were, the kitchen is part of the tour and mention is made of the floor and wall-mounted buzzers that rang in the servants' quarters."

These and other comments illustrate very incidental discussions of servants, namely that they are "mentioned." Of the above comments, the most interesting specifies additional emphasis on servants during a Christmas open house, although the respondent did not indicate what this entailed. Another site includes a first-person interpretation of the Gilded Age housekeeper during Christmas programs. One might assume that if the material is available for a special program, it could also be incorporated into the everyday tour, but this is one of several sites that reserve more specific interpretations of domestic servants for such occasions. Special tours are sometimes offered that focus on the servants' perspective of life in the house, but these are usually driven by the subject of domestic service rather than a holiday or event such as a tea, where historically servants would have been present. The question the Christmas open house raises is whether the

servants depicted during that event are used to create a more realistic depiction of holiday celebrations or if they are playing primarily decorative roles.

This section established the basic characteristics of the sites that participated in my survey and shows that the servants who worked in these homes were similar to what has been determined to be "typical" in the period following the Civil War. The survey allowed me to collect data from a sample that represents domestic situations in a variety of socio-economic levels. The positions for which families hired help were typical based on the small sizes of servant staffs in the middle and upper-middle class homes. Cooks and gardeners supplemented maids-of-all-work as families climbed the social ladder. The ethnic backgrounds of servants represent the regional differences based on immigration and settlement patterns. For the majority of survey participants, these servants were now present in the sites' interpretive tours.

Interpretation of Domestic Servants

The questionnaire's section entitled "Interpretation of Servants at Your Site" offered respondents the opportunity to provide detailed information about their approach to interpreting domestic servants.²³ My goal was to learn more about the resources available at historic house museums, the extent to which specific social history themes are present in their interpretation, the reactions of guides and visitors to this material, and the nature of special programs that offer visitors an in-depth examination of domestic servants.

Respondents overwhelmingly identified third-person interpretation as the technique used at their site, which underscores the significance of the guided tour in most visitors' experience of house museums. Several indicated the use of first-person

interpretation, most often for special programs only, many of which feature servants as main characters: "Educator does living history presentation of a maid with [the] maid's real life daughter to groups (also used as a school program);" "We did a 1st person program once—it was well received—we interpreted maids, chauffeur, cook;" "1st person interpretation of butler, seamstress, cook, maid (also done for school groups);" "1st person program called 'Tales of a Chauffeur' offered a few times during the season."

Such first-person interpretations have been used both to portray the lives of actual servants--the most innovative being the first example--and "generic" servant types. The latter are usually easier characters to develop, with many hybrid first-person interpretations, which use the names of and biographical information about an actual servant and extrapolate his/her work and behavior from period sources. Handler and Gable's discussion of conjecture and authenticity also applies to "generic" servant characters: emphasizing that the characterizations of the servants are based on speculation and of the family on "facts" tends to undermine the credibility of the former. If a servant is interpreted in first-person alongside the lady of the house, visitors should be reminded that both characters may be based on specific "facts," but each incorporates some amount of conjecture.

Although servants may be interpreted in any room of a house museum, most often it is in their own work and living areas. Thus, the ability of visitors to enter or view these rooms makes a significant impact on the amount of information they receive about domestic servants. Five-sixths (84.8 percent) of respondents that interpret domestic service as part of the standard tour have servant rooms open to the public; of these, three-fourths (76.5 percent) indicated that some or all are period rooms [Table A-6]. These

rooms include: the kitchen, servants' bedrooms, butler's pantries, general pantries and other storage areas, laundry rooms, and servants' halls and stairs.²⁴ Rooms in the servants' wing are typically low-priority on restoration schedules, but with so many "new" house museums reaching the thirty-year mark (by which time many of the critical projects, such as stabilizing the structure and significant restorations, have been completed) and the increased interest in servant interpretation, kitchens, laundries, and servants' bedrooms are beginning to receive attention formerly only given to family spaces.

The most common servants' room visitors see is the kitchen, mentioned by nearly 150 of the 190 sites interpreting servants; nearly half are presented as period rooms. Responses to other questions about artifact collections and the interpretation of work and technology explain the prominence of the kitchen as a location for discussing domestic service. The kitchen provides excellent opportunities for interactive and first-person interpretation programs and demonstrations, which tend to be very popular with visitors. Cooking tools, equipment, and historical packaging from food and household products often can be relatively easy to acquire at auctions and antique stores, making kitchens ideal candidates for restoration.

The order in which visitors see the family and servant rooms also has a significant impact on the experience of the site. Tour flow at most historic sites privileges the owner families. Visitors are greeted at the main entrance as a guest would have been during the interpretive period. Guides show rooms on the family side first, which can diminish the tour of the servants' area, particularly if there is little time left by the time the group reaches it. One site noted that they had recently reversed their tour flow to create a

different visitor experience: “Our tour was changed in the last few years from entering the house through the front formal entrance to entering from the corn barn to the back working porch/stoop (where slaves & servants worked & etc.) to the kitchen where this theme continues.” Several sites have created traffic patterns that make it either difficult or impossible to avoid the domestic side of their story before seeing the opulent side of the house. Carter’s Grove, a plantation site associated with Colonial Williamsburg, requires visitors to pass the slave quarters and their interpreters on the way to “the big house.”²⁵ I observed similar experiments occurring at some sites in my case studies.

Historic houses that were originally part of large country estates often included carriage houses, recreation buildings, barns, servant housing, and guest cottages. The expense of maintaining elaborate estates increased in the twentieth century, and most have been dismantled. Although these homes were once well outside the city limits, suburbs have consumed much of their real estate, incorporating what were once quiet retreats into the urban landscape. While few historic estates have retained their full acreage, support buildings have survived at some. By interpreting these additional buildings, house museum staff can address the activities of gardeners, coachmen, chauffeurs, and other outdoor help, most of whom were men. Thus, gender separation in work comes to the forefront as a topic of discussion. While I did not investigate interpretation of these buildings in detail, I did want to survey their prevalence and whether visitors were able to access them. 43.7 percent of sites that interpret domestic servants have support buildings that are accessible to visitors [Table A-7]. Many sites adapt these structures to serve modern uses; one popular feature is the carriage house converted into a visitor center. Some sites have carriage or automobile collections open

for public browsing. These buildings offer additional opportunities for interpreting the variety of duties and people performing them and should be considered in interpretive planning. Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens in Akron, Ohio currently offers a special tour called "Craggs and Crevices," which focuses on the grounds and the work needed to maintain them. Such outbuildings or landscape features provide potential to enrich the visitor's understanding of life on the total estate.

Walker's survey respondents indicated that the lack of relevant artifacts and documentary material is a significant challenge for sites that want to interpret domestic servants. Slightly less than half of free sites rated this problem as a four (4) or five (5), the latter being "very challenging."²⁶ My survey indicates that while such valuable interpretive materials are rare, they do exist. 60.2 percent of sites with domestic service interpretation have small artifact collections relevant to servants [Table A-8]. By far the most common are tools and other work-related equipment. Some respondents noted that these objects were not always the actual ones used at their site, but period objects substituted for the originals. The tools represent a cross-section of the duties performed by servants and other hired workers. Kitchen tools, vacuum cleaners and other household appliances, laundry equipment, and sewing machines represent the work of house servants. Several sites own original furniture from the servants' rooms. Others noted gardening, farm, and stable equipment, which provide evidence of the jobs outdoor workers did. Several sites are lucky to have livery in their collection, which add much to the interpretation of domestic service by illustrating the division uniforms created between the servers and served.

One respondent rightly identified another way of interpreting this distinction through artifacts: “anything the [family] owned would have been cleaned by servants,” a reminder that any house museum has some potential to describe the less glamorous aspects of life regardless of the lack of personal objects owned by servants. Interpreting objects located in the owner family’s rooms from both perspectives also takes into consideration the power of objects. When a collection includes only objects related to the owner family, the lack of such items connected to the servants may make them seem less “real,” unless the artifacts are interpreted from the point of view of all who had associations with them.

A handful of sites are fortunate to have a personal item or two that had belonged to a servant. Personal artifacts like prayer books, cards, and books formerly owned by servants can be found in some house museum collections. Two respondents provided information about servant-related artifacts that are unique or significant to the interpretation. One noted that, “Items in house purchased by servants for owners on periodic trips to China—vases, dishes, embroidered hangings, bronze statues, etc.,” the second that

We have a c. 1940 red wool Santa Claus suit worn by the chauffeur when the homeowner gave X-mas parties for village children; a small chair (extremely poor condition – not on view) returned to museum by descendant of a maid who was given it by homeowner when she left service; two chairs (in excellent condition, restored and on view) given to museum by a descendant of friend of chauffeur who was given them by homeowner. These two chairs had been used in the main house whereas the other chair mentioned above (the one in poor condition) had been in the maid’s own bedroom.

These examples illustrate the often convoluted paths that artifacts take on their way back to their original location, but more importantly, they can be used to interpret relationships between servants and their employers.²⁷ The first shows servants acting in

an uncommon role, as the means for procuring luxury items for their employers. It is unclear whether these were gifts for their employers given upon returning from visits to their native land, or purchases made at their request. Either situation can illustrate affection and trust between servants and employers. The materials and utility of the luxury items could also be juxtaposed with other servant-related artifacts mentioned by this respondent: “wooden yoke for carrying buckets, cleavers, rice sacks, chopping blocks, etc.”

Archival references to the servants of specific households are also scarce, but respondents to my survey provided examples of materials that still exist. Archival collections were slightly less common than those of artifacts, with 52.4 percent of sites interpreting domestic service reporting them [Table A-9]. Photographs were mentioned most often, and references in letters, correspondence to and from servants, account books and records of servants' wages, and oral histories are also well-represented. Few respondents indicated the presence of particularly unusual documents in their collections. Only one provided a detailed list of items: “Letters between servants and owners, letters written to servants by their family abroad, photos of servants and family members by themselves and with owners, WWII ration books in servants' names, Chinese books, etc.” Most examples of servants' presence in the archives are from the employer's perspective. The few instances in which letters and other writings by servants have survived should be examined carefully, especially in the case of correspondence with their employers. The relationship between employers and servant may also be suggested by how employers addressed their servants and vice versa.

Oral histories of domestic servants have a significant presence in historic house museum interpretation; they were mentioned frequently, both as part of archival collections and off-site research. Since many American house museums interpret relatively recent history (within the past 100 years or so), site staff and volunteers have been able to take advantage of having people who remembered the house as a residence or workplace (or their descendants) share their stories. It has been my experience at Brucemore that regardless of the connection, whether the visitor was a servant, a factory employee, or the person who mowed their lawn or delivered their paper on occasion, people usually want to share their connection to this historic place. My conversations with other house museum personnel suggest that this is a common phenomenon that has resulted in more complete information about servants. However, much of this material needs to be used carefully, as the memories of some interviewees may have acquired a nostalgic patina.

Since most sites have limited materials in their own collections, off-site research at libraries and historical societies is a common way of finding additional site-specific material about servants. 56.5 percent of respondents have conducted such research on their domestic staffs [Table A-10]. Many respondents cited the census and city directories as useful sources, in addition to tax records, cemetery records, and collections of family papers located off-site.

General resources, such as period etiquette manuals and women's magazines, histories of domestic service, period newspaper articles, give site-specific material richness and texture by extrapolating how servants may have worked and lived in particular households. Walker found that her respondents had mixed feelings about using

such information. Some were concerned with the potential for distorting, generalizing, or romanticizing the subject, while one respondent in Walker's survey remarked, "there is a great deal to tell in less than one hour so we try to avoid conjecture and assumptions in the tour."²⁸ As Handler and Gable observed at Colonial Williamsburg, this response equates servants with conjectural information and uses it as a reason not to discuss them. However, similar educated assumptions are usually used when interpreting the owner family's story and that fact does not diminish its impact.

The percentage of my respondents that use information that is not site-specific is equal to that of those who do (48.7 percent) [Table A-11]. Speaking in favor of this material, one New England respondent explained how the complexities of domestic service could be illustrated in general terms when specific information does not exist,

Our visitors often ask us about servants and we wish we knew what to tell them. Sensitivity or resistance from staff is not the problem. Question #13 gets to the heart of what we can say. [This was] a New England mill town, and we talk about the fact that given a choice, young women usually preferred the higher wages, higher status, and greater independence of working in the mills instead of working as domestic help. But we can't answer with certainty the basic questions of who, what, when, where, and why domestic service was (or was not) part of our sites.

For most regions, the distribution of sites that do or do not use such material was relatively even, with the exception of the Pacific, in which 82.8 percent of sites do not use information that is not site specific. One reason may be that scholarship on domestic service is heavily weighted in favor of regions east of the Mississippi.

Of five categories of general information provided, "histories of domestic service" was marked most, followed by period etiquette and household manuals [Table A-12]. Since the 1980s, social historians have published several solid histories of domestic service, covering the Colonial era to the late twentieth century. Etiquette and

household manuals proliferated in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, some featuring just one chapter or section about managing domestic servants, others book-length discussions of the issue.²⁹ Regional history collections and period newspapers are less frequently consulted. The “Help Wanted” sections in newspapers provide a good overview of the demand for servants in specific cities since they usually indicate the type of servant desired (“girl for general housework,” cook, butler, etc.) and occasionally ethnic preferences. Period magazines are utilized the least according to this group of respondents, but as illustrated in chapter one, they can and should be used more extensively to address the popular image of domestic servants and the expectations of the women hiring them. Overwhelmingly (65.6 percent), respondents indicated that they use this information to supplement their site-specific material [Table A-13]. Just under 20 percent indicated that general information is their primary resource for interpreting domestic servants.

The fact that so many house museums do include domestic servants in their interpretation is an encouraging sign that interest in a broader social history has made some impact on the way sites present their stories. However, as earlier chapters have argued, simply mentioning the presence of women, minorities, and workers is only a small first step. Once sites have decided to include domestics in their interpretation, they should continually look for ways to improve the depth and sophistication of the information and its presentation.

Difficulty of Servants’ Work

Walker reported that two-thirds of sites interpreting free domestic servants (67.7 percent) do so in depth, meaning they address issues other than work duties.³⁰ My survey

built on this foundation by asking respondents to rate a series of servant-related topics in terms of their significance to their interpretation on a scale of five (5) to one (1), five indicating “very significant” and one “not significant.” The intention was to include a variety of common issues, not all of which centered on the “negative” aspects of domestic service.

Given that defining servants by their duties and interpreting them in their work spaces is common, it is somewhat surprising that the difficulty of their work is not given more attention. Less than one-tenth (8.4 percent) rated this topic as very significant, although more (19.9 percent) rated it fairly significant (4) [Table A-14]. One quarter (24.1 percent) indicated that this topic was not significant to their interpretation of servants. Perhaps the simplest and least controversial way of describing the duties of servants is to refer to the difficulty of the work, not necessarily in terms of skills but in its intensity and the long hours.

Unless sites have task lists in their archives, it may be difficult to provide specific examples of an average workday for the domestic staff. One respondent noted the presence of “recipes, pictures, notes to housekeeper as to what is required to set up the house in the morning” in their collection, but most sites are not fortunate enough to have such documents. However, one can speculate about the servants’ workload by considering the size of the house, the number of servants and their “specialties” and the equipment available at the time. Some writers on domestic service in women’s magazines provided guidelines for how to schedule the servants’ workdays.³¹ While one must bear in mind that readers did not always follow this advice to the letter, these examples do provide insight into the type of workday that many women expected their

servants to follow. Published reports of experiences in domestic service such as those analyzed in chapter one also support interpretation of difficulty of servants' work, both its physical and emotional impacts.

Since kitchens are the most frequently included and restored servants' rooms on house tours, food preparation often plays an important part of interpreting the difficulty of servants' work. Kitchen programs are included in tours of many sites in order to demonstrate the preparation of period cuisine. Interpreting the difficulty of servants' work should also be a conscious effort to reveal more than the process of completing tasks or the nostalgia of the "olden days." Several issues could be explored: the specific aspects of jobs that made them difficult, the physical and mental fatigue, or misunderstandings due to language barriers.

Several respondents elaborated on their interpretation of work and its meaning for visitors. One noted that their site was "currently in the process of revamping tour which may include stronger descriptions of staff's duties." Another indicated that description of servants' work was not isolated from other information on the tour but is "interwoven with the general commentary and history." Visitor interest in servants' work manifests itself in many questions: "Visitors want to know how much labor and how many people it took to run a household with a 32 room mansion;" "We have found that such interpretation rounds out our site [interpretation] as a whole—answers many visitor questions: Who kept this place clean? Did Mrs. K do the cooking? Who took care of the gardens, etc." One respondent provided a specifically strong endorsement by visitors: "Our visitors are fascinated with the servants' work and the whole 'upstairs/downstairs' concept."

Many respondents suggested that visitor interest in the servants' work is due to their ability to relate to these duties in their own lives. Comments such as "People can relate better to servants/working class than to wealthy" were common responses in the survey and have been made by museum professionals in various personal communications during the course of my research. The comparison is definitely a legitimate one in modern society where most people are responsible for doing their own household labor, often in addition to demanding paid work. However, the comparison of servants' work and that done by modern people can and should be investigated beyond household chores by juxtaposing domestic service with low-wage work conferring similar status in today's society, an issue that will be addressed in the final chapter.

Use of Domestic Appliances and Technology

Since equipment and tools were the most frequently mentioned servant-related artifacts at house museums, it is not surprising that respondents rated "Use of domestic appliances and technology" as among the most significant topics [Table A-15]. Close to one-fifth (18.3 percent) identified it as "very significant," and one-fourth (24.6 percent) rated it of at least average significance (3). Nearly twice as many respondents gave appliances and technology the highest rating compared to the related topic of difficulty of servants' work, which may suggest that the interpretation of appliances and/or technology focuses more on the object than the meaning it had to those who used it.

This particular theme is more dependent on the presence of physical artifacts than others in this survey. Often, the original residents, and in some cases the early administrators of historic sites, did not find household appliances or tools worth saving. While they can be described in the context of modern versions of the technology (for

example, how the early electric washing machine differed from the modern version), having the physical object facilitates a more concrete interpretation. If there is evidence that the staff used vacuums, electric irons, washing machines and other technology, it is not necessary to have *the* vacuum, iron, or washing machine to make interpretation credible. As Spencer Crew and James Sims have suggested, use of “generic” objects is more acceptable in interpretations of nineteenth and twentieth century life because mass production made products accessible nationally.³² Such equipment is available if one is willing to look, particularly at antique stores and auctions (both in person and on-line), which some respondents have found to be useful sources for period objects. Volunteers and staff members interested in antiques may be willing to get involved in the search. These items are also common in the collections of county and state historical societies, whose staff might be happy to negotiate a loan in addition to joint programming or cross-promotion.

The interpretation of household technology as it related to servants should take into consideration the place of servants and new appliances in the home. One can easily juxtapose the machine and the servant with interesting results. The purchase of household appliances was often a response to the shrinking servant labor pool, either as a complete replacement of the human servant, or as a supplement to increase productivity by reducing, not eliminating servants, as the washing machine ads illustrated in chapter one. Industrial machines and Frederick Winslow Taylor’s theories of scientific management served as models for the efficiently managed home. Perhaps most significant to the machine metaphor is that women often described their servants as similarly inanimate objects, to the extent that writers in women’s magazines frequently

reminded their readers that servants were, in fact, human beings. Interpreting early technology also presents challenges since it is easy to see these objectives from modern perspectives rather than those of their own time. When interpreting change, it is important to ask visitors to consider what the change meant in its historical context as opposed to taking the presentist approach of “isn’t life so much better today,” or encouraging nostalgia for an era of seemingly greater simplicity.

Ethnic Backgrounds of Servants

The potential for historic house museums to address immigration and ethnicity is a key way for these institutions to incorporate social history into their interpretation. They provide a tangible locus for exploring the activities and relationships that immigrants participated in as they negotiated life in a new country. Only a very small number of respondents indicated that this information was completely unknown. While few sites have complete information about their servants’ ethnic backgrounds, most have some, usually derived from research in census records.

Despite the availability and apparent possession of such information, as a theme it is of medium to low significance according to my respondents [Table A-16]. Just over one-tenth (12.0 percent) indicated that the ethnic backgrounds of servants was very significant to their interpretation, compared to nearly one-fifth (18.8 percent) who rated it of medium importance, and almost one-third (28.8 percent) who rated the theme as not significant. Information on ethnic backgrounds, if included at all, most likely is presented simply as a “fact” and without any contextual background. Several respondents distinguished between the urban immigrant domestic servant and local hired girls (typically white and native-born): “In this region [New England], long before the arrival

of Irish domestics, it was common to have household servants who were daughters from inland farm families;" "[W]e compare rural setting with city expectations of domestic help."

Some referred to specific ethnic groups. Most first-person characters with identified ethnic backgrounds are Irish. One site indicated that a program on Irish servants was in development, another indicated that it already has a successful Halloween program interpreting the role of Irish servants in bringing this celebration to the United States. A California respondent described how the site incorporates the presence of immigrant servants into local and regional history: "We use what little we know of the Chinese servant at our site to interpret the larger concept of the history of the small Chinatown in our city and the general history of the Chinese immigration to the West." Stories about Chinese and Japanese servants appeared more frequently than those related to any other specific ethnic background. Two sites related stories about Japanese servants that illustrate acceptance and prejudice. In one, the servant came to the United States with \$1 and died a millionaire; the second tells of a Japanese couple who went back to Japan to avoid internment during World War II.

Sites interpreting free African-American servants face special challenges, much like those with slavery in their past. A Virginia site offers a focus tour on domestic service that addresses the difficulties of African Americans during the Jim Crow era. The difficulties of interpreting race prompted a thoughtful comment about the interaction of guides and visitors: "It is a rather sensitive issue. I personally have a harder time discussing the servants' roles with African-American visitors—not because I don't think I should—but because I want to be sensitive to their feelings on the subject." Addressing

the lower status of immigrant servants can also be tricky. At many homes with large servant staffs, the ethnicity of servants influenced backstairs hierarchies. British butlers and French ladies' maids were important symbols of status both upstairs and downstairs, while others, particularly servants who arrived as part of the "new immigration," had low social positions even among their peers. Communities that continue to have significant populations of specific immigrant groups often sponsor ethnic heritage celebrations as demonstrations of pride in their ancestry. In these communities, one might find the interpretation of hierarchy and prejudice among immigrant servants more difficult.³³

Overall, answers to this particular question and one later in the survey concerning special programs seem to indicate that while information about ethnic backgrounds of servants might have a limited place on a standard house tour, special focus tours and programs investigate this issue in greater depth. For some house museum professionals, the desire to address immigration is serious, but there is little opportunity for follow through: "I studied immigration history in grad school concentrating on domestic service so if there were a way to include it—I would!"

Working and Living Conditions of Servants

Working conditions were rated slightly higher in significance than the work itself, with nearly one-third (32.4 percent) indicating it very significant (5) or significant (4) (23.0 percent) [Table A-17]. This broad category incorporates work spaces and equipment in addition to the ways employers treated their staff. It may also be more fully treated than work itself because it relies less on object collections. A house with a relatively intact servants' wing usually has enough architectural information to suggest the nature of physical working conditions. The size of kitchens, laundries, and work

rooms, their location (i.e. attic, main level, or basement), and the number of windows and amount of natural light can indicate the basic amenities owner families provided for servants' work. Sites that still have original equipment like stoves, drying racks, indoor plumbing, and convenient cold storage can address working conditions on a deeper level in conjunction with the emergence of new technology.

Respondents regard living conditions as slightly more significant than working conditions [Table A-18]. 12.8 percent rated this theme "very significant" and 24.6 percent rated it fairly significant (4). Living conditions can be interpreted in much the same way as working conditions by examining architectural spaces such as servants' bedrooms, dining rooms and other amenities. These areas can be good illustrations of living conditions regardless of whether the rooms are empty or restored because they can suggest the servants' quality of life. The amenities a family could provide its servants are usually easy to determine. The number of bedrooms can reflect the number of occupants per room and the level of privacy they experienced. The presence of a common area, such as a servants' dining room, indicates that the family was sensitive to their needs to have a place to eat their own meals and a place to gather or invite visitors. Bathroom facilities are also an important issue, since servants who had to share with their employers could face difficulties with basic hygiene.³⁴ Evidence of wages and time off are important indicators of the employers' attitudes towards servants. Scanning the census for households in the site's neighborhood also illustrate how it compared to peers. The home's location can also suggest servants' access to social activities and the degree to which they were isolated from people outside of their workplace.

Social Stigma of Domestic Service

The social stigma of domestic service, a subject frequently discussed by servants and their employers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is a relatively insignificant topic in historic house museum tours [Table A-19]. Nearly half (45.5 percent) gave it the lowest rating (1) and only a small fraction (2.6 percent) gave it the highest rating (5). Like the term “servants,” this topic also elicited some comments, particularly concerning negative connotations of “stigma:” “‘Stigma?’ Working at our site was considered prestigious and jobs were coveted according to servant documents;” “You are making assumptions. The ‘servants’ were paid employees, just as the cowboys, carpenters, and hay crews. They were more known and respected within the household, but they were not an ‘issue.’”

Even more so than the term “servant,” “stigma” has a degrading connotation. However, as chapter one illustrated, it was the term used in conversations about the servant problem and the reason young women avoided domestic service in favor of factory work. During her undercover work as a servant, Lillian Pettingill found that one manifestation of this stigma was the fact that the lady of the house would not be seen in public with her servant. As an example, she relates a conversation she had with one mistress regarding whether they could walk down the street together:

‘Why, yes, Eliza [her servant pseudonym], of course I could walk down the street with you the same as anyone else. . . . I could, only I mustn’t on account of what the neighbors would say if they should see me go out with the girl. Our standards of respectability appear to be the same, and if I had met you anywhere outside, not knowing your work, I should have been glad to follow up the meeting to a closer acquaintance, if that were convenient and proved agreeable. But instead of that you come to work in my kitchen, so I can’t know you outside of it. It’s wrong, and foolish (of the neighbours, of society), but we have to conform, or where are we?’³⁵

Some twentieth century sites may find discussing such topics with visitors uncomfortable or even impossible if family connections to the site remain. One respondent noted: "Because we interpret fairly recent history, in an area still rural in character, we have to tread lightly. Local visitors and school children are frequently the children and grandchildren of individuals who interacted with the [owner family], including employees." Sites with descendants of the owner families that are still significantly involved as trustees may also find difficulties with suggestions that they treated or viewed their employees any different than any other person. Interpretation of stigma needs to be balanced with the fact that for some this position offered the means of survival in a new country. While native-born women generally avoided domestic service because of its stigma, obviously many people took these positions and performed their duties with dignity and with the hope that their children would be able to have more socially respectable jobs.

Friendship Between Servants and Employers

The quality of relationships between servants and employers is difficult to generalize. As one Northeastern respondent explained, "Former servants gave 'mixed' reviews of their experiences. This is likely due to the level of their service and their job performance." Nevertheless, stories about interactions between server and served are key elements to a satisfying site interpretation. These were complex relationships that have few modern equivalents. The employment of regular housekeepers, nannies, and maid services does provide a reference point for visitors, but it is hard for most to imagine what it would be like to live with their employer in the same house where their

subordinate status is clearly visible from dress, access to certain spaces, living conditions, and so on.

Rather than asking respondents to rate the overall significance of “relationships between servants and employers,” I used two questions to distinguish positive from the negative. The significance of friendships rated as considerably more important than conflicts [Table A-20]. Respondents shared some extraordinary stories about servant-employer relationships at their sites. Many noted the long tenures of particular servants and emphasized loyalty, bequests in wills, and other courtesies.³⁶ One site clarified that friendships applied only to relationships between the employer and the butler, an echo of the hierarchy within the servant wing and a more accurate statement of the complexity of such social relations. Another example of the hierarchy below stairs is evident at one site where “Most top servants received a bequest from the estate owner at death. This money they invested wisely and made millions themselves.” Others related stories that were less specific about the particular servants’ position in the household but provided more details about the people themselves:

[The owner] and Osaki were lifelong companions. Upon [the owner’s] death, his will stipulated that Osaki could live in his separate residence on the Estate until Osaki died. Osaki was so much a part of [the owner’s] life, not including information about Osaki would be a disservice.

[The owner’s] primary servants were Harry and Eliza . . . These were slaves who stayed on as paid servants in the years following the Civil War. Both Harry and Eliza outlived [the owner] and Eliza lived into the twentieth century. They remained life long servants and [their master] rewarded their dedication by putting their son Quinn through college in New York.

Our situation is unique. The last resident of the house, a widow, engaged the services of a young African-American girl. This was part of a program administered by the County government in the early 20th century. This girl became like a daughter to the widow and remained with here until the widow’s death (42 years!). She is buried in the family plot of the widow.

Most of these stories indicated a close relationship between an employer and servant in which the friendship was one that transcended differences in race and ethnicity. Of particular interest is the fact that the servants identified in these stories are either African Americans or Asian, two groups that were considered the most "different" at the turn of the century. Only one of my respondents specifically mentioned that servants were like "family," a statement frequently used by house museum guides to describe the intimacy of servant-employer relationships.³⁷

That some servants and their employers had long-term loyalties to each other is an important point that interpretation can use as a starting point to address the complexities of such relationships, which are probably less evident than the surface details. I have no doubt that servants and their mistresses could and did experience mutually affectionate relationships. At the same time, it was not a friendship of equals. Some mistresses did take maternal interests in their servants, especially the young girls, which is a position of kindness but also power. Based on responses from this survey, experiences during site visits, and at my own site, stories about "positive" relationships with employers seem more likely to survive than those with a "negative" cast. I suspect this is due to the fact that stories, documents, and artifacts connected with "favorite" servants (who may have lived with and worked for the family many years) have a greater sentimental value than those of servants who came and went or who didn't have the benefit of personal interaction with their employers. Like furnishings and objects within a historic house, the stories that survive are the finest or most treasured.

Conflict Between Servants and Employers

Conflict between servants and employers had the second highest total ratings of “not significant” across all regions [Table A-21]. That conflict plays a very minimal role in the interpretation of free domestic service is consistent with Walker’s findings, which indicated that slave sites were more likely to address conflict than free sites. One reason that this topic has not become an important part of interpretation is due to a lack of information; two respondents specifically mentioned that they did not know of any instances of conflict. Some employers may have left clues about discordant relationships with servants in letters and diaries or they may be inferred based on a regular turnover of staff.

Unfortunately, reports from the servants’ perspective are harder to find. General sources such as these written by servants or reformers (like Pettingill) working as servants suggest how they may have viewed conflicts and disagreements with their employers. These examples can be useful references to illustrate that although servant-employer relationships appear to have been amiable in that particular household, conflict was also possible. The fact that many historic house museums are former residences of the wealthy who typically had more than one servant may explain some absence of conflict. In very large households, lower servants may have had extremely limited contact with their employers, who typically communicated orders via the butler or head housekeeper. These servants probably rarely saw their mistress after the initial interview, if she was even present on that occasion.

However, relationships between servants and mistresses are not the only ones idealized at historic houses. Family relationships are typically presented with a distinct

lack of everyday domestic conflict. Thomas Schlereth, professor of American Studies at Notre Dame and regular commentator on public history, has made similar observations:

House museums, where their histories demand it, might also reveal the marital conflicts of their former occupants such as suggested by one spouse's insistence of separate bedrooms. Sibling rivalry might be shown in the special décor and toys given one child and not the other. If we know there to have been child or spouse mistreatment, alcohol or drug abuse (more widespread among 19th-century middle-class Americans than we once realized) or prolonged illness that, in turn, strongly affected life as lived in the historic house, we need to explore how best to interpret such manifestations of what social historian Gary Nash calls 'the private side of American history.'³⁸

Schlereth's comments are now twenty years old and for the most part there has been no widespread progress made in the interpretation of family relationships. Most house museum staff members probably feel uncomfortable airing the owner family's dirty laundry even if conflicts are documented. There may also be an aversion to appealing to the public's interest in scandals. One site did attempt to broach such issues. The Alexander Ramsey House in St. Paul, Minnesota was to present a program entitled "Victorian Secrets," in which syphilis and other common problems of the era would be discussed. The program was to be held on September 11, 2001; given the tragic events of that day, the program appears to have been cancelled and was only recently rescheduled to take place in September 2004.

Some sites seem to be a little more comfortable with discussing family problems, as I observed touring the Maggie Lena Walker Historic Site in Richmond, Virginia. During our visit, the guide described the events of the night when one of Mrs. Walker's sons shot and killed her husband after mistaking him for a burglar. Random comments by the guide throughout the tour prompted one visitor to ask if there was any evidence that Mr. Walker had been unfaithful; the guide acknowledged that such stories do exist

(although they are undocumented). Ultimately, family relationships also must be interpreted more candidly to contextualize the discussion of servant-employer interaction. If the only conflicts discussed on the house museum tour involve servants, visitors may come away with the idea that household discord was only a servant problem.

Ethnic or Racial Prejudices of the Era

The topic of ethnic or racial prejudice rated slightly higher than conflict overall, despite both having a high percentage of low ratings. Lack of information or discomfort with the topic may influence the extent to which these issues are discussed. Some ethnic or racial prejudices are well-known to historians, such as anti-Irish sentiment, racism based on skin color, and fear of Eastern and Southern European immigrants. Sites that interpret the early twentieth century should also consider the presence of nativism and its impact on society. Two regions with the most respondents rating this topic a five or four were the Southern North Atlantic states and the Southern South Atlantic States, which tended to have large servant populations of Irish and African American servants, respectively [Table A-22].

Some respondents commented specifically on the site's interpretation of ethnic or racial prejudice, often to state that the site's servants' received good treatment: "Touched on if questioned about prejudices. Servants at this house were well treated;" "Class prejudice too. Adult tour emphasizes the family members maintained strict social hierarchy with their help. More emphasis on class differences." The second comment is one of the strongest and most direct statements I received concerning the interpretation of the social structure of households with servants. Although the respondent highlighted class differences, since these were often connected with race or ethnicity, it is likely that

both are addressed. The first comment is probably typical of many sites in that guides are willing to broach the issue if asked, but otherwise may not offer the information.

Respondents rated the earlier question regarding the ethnic backgrounds of servants much more significant than the interpretation of racial or ethnic prejudices. This suggests that although interpreters are comfortable telling visitors that servants were immigrants and their country of origin, they probably say little more. If sites have information on the ethnic or racial backgrounds on some of the servants, and most evidence I collected suggested they do, then to avoid interpreting the significance of their heritage regionally and nationally eliminates an important dimension of the servants' lives. The interpretation of prejudice is somewhat trickier in the case of white foreign-born servants, like the Irish, whose descendents have since assimilated into American culture.

As with the topic of social stigma, staff should discuss ways to approach prejudice strongly, but sensitively. Again, the interpretation of slavery offers some excellent models. *Great Tours!*, a handbook on thematic tours, includes the reading "Interpreting Slavery at Historic Sites: Tips for Guides," which offers suggestions that are useful for any site seeking to address differences of any kind:

Present a balanced view. Slavery is a story of horror but also a story of human strength and survival on the part of the African Americans who experienced it and who maintained their humanity despite the inhumane system.

Emphasize the individual. Seek opportunities to convert 'slavery' into the story of the men and women who endured it. Slaves were individuals with individual responses to the system. Help visitors appreciate their multiple perspectives.

Face race. A full and honest treatment of slavery eventually requires taking on the complex topics of race and racism. Increase your comfort level with discussing these complex issues a little at a time.

Embrace complexity. Avoid pat answers. Increase your tolerance for complexity and help your visitors do the same. The search for historical 'truth' is a tentative, ongoing exploration shaped by the historical circumstances of the present.³⁹

The final suggestion to embrace complexity is the key to interpreting any potentially controversial issues associated with domestic service, be they stigma, conflict, or prejudice. All rely on understanding the social context of the period one is interpreting and are not necessarily revealed in site-specific materials. Guides may also find it more comfortable to address these issues in the form of questions posed to their audience, not for them to answer together, but to give them something to chew on after they leave the site. Freeman Tilden, whose *Interpreting Our Heritage* is a classic handbook for historic sites, advocated this approach in one of his six principles of interpretation: "The chief aim of Interpretation [sic] is not instruction, but provocation." He further states that the purpose of interpretation is "to stimulate the reader or hearer toward a desire to widen his horizon of interests and knowledge, and to gain an understanding of the greater truths behind any statement of fact."⁴⁰ While a lofty goal, it is an excellent statement of what house museums need to do, and may be particularly effective when discussing controversial issues: be direct about the actions of people in the past but also leave room for visitors to absorb and think through the controversy on their own.

Gender of Domestic Servants

Since domestic servants were most often women, several scholars have recommended that their stories provide a way to incorporate gender into historic site interpretation.⁴¹ Survey respondents indicated that gender plays a moderately significant role in their interpretation. Although the majority rated the topic as not significant (29.3 percent), most of the remaining two-thirds rated it of medium significance or higher

[Table A-23]. Discussing gender and domestic servants needs to go beyond simply adding female perspectives in the domestic realm, but should address the general status of women during the period. Only one respondent, the childhood home of a famous woman, addressed the role of gender in the interpretation of domestic servants: "It fits in with the lifestyle information to form a story of [her] childhood. It is important for the development of an atmosphere during her childhood years and her feeling toward 'what women should do.'" Most of the servants that respondents mentioned in their comments are women, except for the Chinese and Japanese men present at west coast sites. However, no one offers specific insight into how gender issues are interpreted during their tours.

The "Servant Problem"

The "servant problem," while an important issue during its time, is for the most part absent in house museum tours. Over half of the respondents (51.8) identified the theme as not significant [Table A-24]. This topic was one of the more frequently skipped, which may indicate that respondents had little information about the issue or that a definition might have clarified the question. As chapter one demonstrated, the "servant problem" was a hot topic in the period represented by many of my survey population. It is a broad issue that is relevant to a wide variety of sites, which I will return to in the final chapter to address how it may be effectively used as an interpretive theme.

Benefits of Domestic Service

The "benefits" of domestic service is another topic that might have been well-served by additional explanation. Although domestic service had many disadvantages that repelled women from this work, even some domestics argued that the position had

some advantages. Despite her negative assessment of domestic service overall, Lillian Pettingill, acknowledged that she did benefit from her experience, which gave her better health, greater strength, an appreciation of domestic tasks, and the ability to save money.⁴² For women who were new arrivals to the United States, domestic service provided practically immediate employment with room and board. With few expenses to take care of, servants were able to save money easily, and many sent a substantial portion of their earnings to their families in Europe to help them emigrate. A balanced approach to interpreting domestic service can include the argument made by many women of the period (especially mistresses) that domestic service was a worthwhile pursuit. Survey respondents did not see this topic as very significant to their interpretation of domestic service; more than one-third (39.8 percent) gave it the lowest rating, and about one-fifth (23.6 percent) identified it had medium significance [Table. A-25].

Servants' Uniforms

Respondents rated the topic of servants' uniforms the least significant of the thirteen [Table A-26]. Since most sites lack photographs of their servants, some may find it too conjectural to discuss the particulars of the subject without specific evidence. The few sites that have actual livery in their collections are extremely fortunate in their ability to present a concrete example.

The images of servants in chapter one illustrated the importance of livery in the depictions of ideal servants. Uniforms were a divisive issue between servants and their employers. As a visual indicator of status, or lack thereof, livery drew a clear line of distinction between the mistress and her servant, regardless of how close their relationship may have been. Given the abundance of general primary source materials

that feature images of uniformed servants, it is a relatively easy topic to interpret the social climate of the household.

Several sites indicated the use of first-person interpretation of domestic servants, so clearly some have begun to approach the issue of livery through costuming their guides. However, respondents did not indicate to what extent the interpreter incorporates the uniform's meaning into their presentation. Dressing as a servant may be a way to distinguish one character from another, as seen in historical advertisements. Since there appears to be no objection to staff interpreting in the servant's uniform, the next step is to mine its significance and use it as a tool to bring social history alive.

To get an overall impression of the significance of these thirteen topics, I calculated the average rating according to region and question.⁴³ There are no clear regional trends when the data is considered as a whole; most regions' overall ratings (average for all thirteen topics) fell in the vicinity of 2.4 [Table A-27]. All but one region rated at least one topic lower than 2, which was balanced by the fact that all but one region also rated at least one topic above 3. Since all regions rated the agglomerated topics below modest significance, as a whole the majority of sites could benefit by enhancing more aspects of their domestic service interpretation. Many respondents indicated that there is a great interest in improving this theme and I think that as sites mature, the significance of many of the rated topics will increase.

In terms of individual topics, those with the highest ratings concerned the use of domestic appliances and technology and living conditions (followed closely by working conditions). Both topics are easy to relate to tangible objects, which respond to the general visitor's interest in "real things" and as a way to interpret the architectural spaces.

Uniforms, the “servant problem” and conflict between servants and employers received the lowest average ratings. While some of the lack of interest in these topics may be explained by wanting to avoid controversial issues, I think much of the problem is the lack of evidence, both physical and documentary, of their presence in the lives of the owner families. As previous chapters have argued, history museums and historic sites have long approached their artifact collections from an object-based, formalist perspective; the interest in the idea-based, analytical method is relatively new. However, even lack of such collections doesn’t mean that potentially controversial topics can’t be addressed because there are many period sources that present this information and can be used as context. Guides who might be uncomfortable with this material may be receptive to general information about these topics as opposed to specifically attaching the issues to the owner family.

Reactions to Interpretations of Domestic Service

Considering the controversy that has surrounded the series of Smithsonian exhibitions and programs that focus on the interpretation of slavery at Colonial Williamsburg, I initially expected some respondents to mention resistance to the subject either by guides or visitors. Walker’s survey data suggested otherwise, as does mine. Both guides and visitors have responded positively to the interpretation of domestic servants. Over three-quarters of the respondents (76.5 percent) indicated that guide reactions to interpreting domestic service were “enthusiastic” or “favorable” [Table. A-28]. Since the survey shows a tendency to avoid the more controversial issues (prejudice and stigma, for example) in their interpretation of domestic service, it seems natural that resistance is uncommon. Sites should use the enthusiasm these themes evoke to build

their confidence and as an incentive to make the interpretation of domestic servants more intellectually challenging.

Respondents frequently commented on the reactions of guides to the material, which reveal their curiosity about domestic servants and the variety of concerns they have. The sites' lack of information qualified some of their responses, as one respondent noted, "Tour guides still feel relatively uninformed on this topic." Several made comments similar to one respondent, "If information were included, I'm sure they would be very enthusiastic."

The number of sites that indicated their guides are indifferent or resistant to interpreting domestic service is low, but several respondents clarified these positions. These comments are indicative of the traditional approach to house museums that emphasizes the family, the house, and its contents: "We simply acknowledge it. They were meant to be not seen but had good relationships to the family," and "If asked, they discuss." Other comments suggested that interest in and focus on domestic service interpretation largely depends on who the guide is, which is typical for most historic house museums: "Some are very accepting and want to know more and some are uncomfortable and want to tell only happy stories;" "A couple of volunteer guides have expressed concern about future emphasis on servants overwhelming the story of the owners. Most are positive about expanding interpretation;" "They like naming them and describing duties but no macro-content is provided;" "I think that most are drawn more to the comfortable and luxurious existence of the family. A number of the guides, though, are very enthusiastic about the kitchen/cook interpretation."

The comments of some respondents indicated that including information on domestic servants has generated a great deal of interest and curiosity among guides, and that over time the material becomes well integrated into their understanding of the site. “It is fascinating to our volunteer guides;” “Some began with much hesitation and anxiety, but now it seems to them that without this interpretation the tour would be incomplete;” “Our volunteers want to know more—they are willing to present the material;” “We have always included the servants’ quarters and kitchen in our tours. There has really not been a reaction as it is accepted.”

Several respondents added that the extent to which guides interpret domestic service also depends on the interest of visitors. For most sites, admission is a major part of their income, and the fear of alienating visitors or losing patrons can drive some decisions about interpretation and educational programs. Visitor studies has emerged as an interest among several museum professionals and most museum conferences now feature several sessions about surveying visitors and identifying audiences. This trend has not caught on widely in the house museum field, and most information about visitors is anecdotal from talking to them after tours or programs or occasional unsolicited calls and letters from visitors.

Respondents to my survey suggest that visitor reactions are overwhelmingly positive. Nearly one-fifth of respondents (18.8 percent) identified their visitor as enthusiastic about the subject and over half (61.2 percent) found their reactions favorable [Table A-29]. The majority of comments related to visitor responses indicate a great deal of interest: “People sometimes comment that it is good to talk about workers, not just family;” “The kitchen at our museum was converted years ago into an administration

area, very often visitors ask where it was and what it was like. They clearly want to see and experience more of the domestic side of the story;" "Often questions about servant areas and why they can't see more. Public interest is very high;" "The first time we offered 'servants' tours' 1,000 people showed up for sixty-four tickets;" "Visitors seem glad to hear about the servants and slaves because there are still many places that do not interpret such topics. Some come with not much knowledge and others who are considerably well read and educated in the areas;" "[O]ur docents receive 99 percent approval ratings from visitors for their tours which cover the Jim Crow era and the civil rights movement that resulted from it." Clearly, visitors have the desire to learn more about the working side of household.

Special Programs

Like plantations that offer African-American focus tours, some house museums have started offering tours and programs that address the lives of domestic servants or life at the site from the servant's perspective either for adults or school groups. Few respondents to my survey indicated the presence of such programs for adults at their sites, although I have had the opportunity to learn about some programs through site visits. The events mentioned for the adult audience were primarily living history events, open houses, and tours of servant areas that are not part of the standard tour. The number of sites that offer programs for school groups is also small, but more reported offerings for children than for adults.

The youth audience is an important one at house museums, as it likely is for object-based history museums and other historic sites. Programs for school groups are not usually financially lucrative in and of themselves, but provide opportunities to give

children a connection to the site at a young age. Children who have an enjoyable experience at a historic site often bring their parents to see the house, at which point the family can be encouraged to become members and attend other events.

More importantly, the variety of innovative and engaging school programs highlights the value of house museums as teaching tools, and of all the information I collected, these programs seem to have the most solid grounding in social history. School programs have become much more than field trips and vacation days for students; most teachers use these visits as opportunities to apply classroom learning to “the real thing.” As a result, museum educators have become very sensitive to teachers’ needs and develop their programs to complement the local curriculum and state or national social studies standards, which often highlight the study of race, ethnicity, class, and gender.

The school programs that respondents described in their surveys fell into several categories. These include comparison activities that pair family and servant, interpretation from the servant’s point-of-view (often using a first-person interpreter), role-playing and hands-on activities, and discussions of the duties of servants. Programs that compare the lives of servants and family members often stress relationships, such the descriptions offered by two respondents: “Both programs [Elderhostel and school groups] focus on a day in the life of the family beginning with the servants preparing food, horses, etc. and includes relationships of family to servants, background of servants, typical day for servants;” “viewing and analyzing social history from a family and servant point of view; first-person narrative—interaction and interdependence of servants and family.” These remarks do not indicate what kinds of relationships the guide and students discuss (friendship, conflict, or both), but the focus on this topic is an

excellent way to give equal emphasis on both parties and it offers the opportunity to address sensitive issues inherent in these relationships.

Two other sites reported on programs that use comparison in slightly different ways. One Midwestern site's program asks students to evaluate private family and servants' living spaces "in terms of gender, ethnicity, and social class." Defining the lives of servants according to living spaces as opposed to the more frequently interpreted work spaces provides the opportunity for students to understand servants as people and not solely as workers. A New York site's program addresses the differences between the lives of family and servants, but also compares how the nineteenth century servant staff cared for the mansion and how its current stewards take care of the house and its history today.

Some respondents also mentioned offering outreach programs or special school tours that focus on the servant's point of view. These programs often feature staff portraying servants, either during classroom visits or for on-site tours. Some sites provide lessons that focus on specific documented servants, as one respondent described: "We offer a segment of an outreach program which deals with an Oswego woman of Irish background who worked as a servant and cook in the late 19th and early 20th century (most info from an oral history interview, c. 1975)."

Programs that involve role-playing and/or hands-on activities for the students address domestic service in varying levels of detail. Some highlight housekeeping, cooking, and other domestic duties and give students a taste of the physical demands these tasks made on servants. Respondents did not indicate whether the interpretation and performance of this work by the students involved more than the tasks themselves, so

it is difficult to determine the extent to which the work was linked to the issues of race/ethnicity, class, or gender. A respondent from Colorado offered a more detailed example of how the site uses role playing by describing a program in which “The children are costumed as family members, servants, and others connected to the house. When we get to the room on the tour where we talk about their character, the children do a hands-on activity their character would have done.” Each student receives a biography card with their character’s photograph on one side and their name, position, age, birth and death dates, and a short first-person description on the other. Four servants are part of this program, a chauffeur, maid, cook, and laundress, a group that illustrates a good variety of duties within the household. Several colleagues have mentioned developing similar programs through which students are encouraged to see the site through someone else’s eyes. Some have cited the Holocaust Museum’s identification cards as the inspiration for this approach.

The most direct approach to school programs with an emphasis on domestic service addresses the servants’ duties. One respondent described two specific tours that highlight work: “A cook’s duties—life before supermarkets—level of knowledge the cooks needed to have. Also we focus on a ‘technology tour’ for school students that focuses on labor-saving devices used by staff and family.” Both tours offer insight into important aspects of the servant’s qualifications and workday, but again, it is difficult to know whether these issues are discussed in their social contexts.

These examples of school programs illustrate that it is possible to provide experiences that have a solid grounding in social history at historic house museums. However, currently, the audience seems limited to schoolchildren, which may be

explained in several ways. Many programs such as those described also involve pre-visit activities, some of which are supplied by the site and include facsimiles of archival materials. Curriculum-based programs are also likely to have concrete ties to classroom lessons. In these cases, young visitors are learning about the site before their arrival, and most likely have a debriefing session after they return to the classroom. Guides can skip the introductory information and launch right into specific, in-depth discussions with the students. In my own experience, I have had some of my best tour discussions with middle-school students who are well-prepared to address some of the finer points of social history because they have the background material fresh in their minds. Since regular adult visitors typically have little to no background to build on, it is harder to cover much more than the surface issues during the time constraints of the regular tour. However, the programs developed for school groups could, and should, be modified for adult audiences given the apparent interest that visitors have in servant life.

School programs are not foolproof, however. One respondent noted that some teachers don't use the pre-visit materials, "So students come unprepared and chaperones treat tour as a vacation." Another indicated that their site had offered servant-related school programs but no teachers showed interest. Despite the difficulties that school programs sometimes create, the examples of success illustrate that some of the best learning taking place at house museums is the result of these efforts.

Sites Not Interpreting Domestic Service

In her survey of historic house museums interpretation, Patricia Walker found that resistance and the interpretation of sensitive issues had little if any influence on the decision not to interpret domestic service. Rather, it is primarily the lack of historical

resources and artifacts that hinders their progress.⁴⁴ My survey also revealed this to be a significant barrier to interpreting domestic service, and that related issues, namely lack of personnel and finances contribute to whether this theme is part of site interpretation.

Respondents to my survey tended to mark multiple reasons why they do not interpret domestic service, but the most frequently marked was “This site lacks the necessary artifacts and archives to address this issue as we would like” [Table A-30]. Many respondents commented further on the difficulty of documenting domestic servants due to lack of records, scant evidence, or vague archival sources. One remark describes problems faced by most sites nationwide, “The museum archives contain a few photographs of African Americans who appear to be servants or farm hands. Hard facts concerning any details of their roles is either unavailable or inconclusive.” The consensus among respondents whose sites do not interpret domestic service is that the lack of documented information is a significant reason behind their decision.

The recurring references to the need for site-specific documentation are similar to those experienced by Richard Handler and Eric Gable during their fieldwork at Colonial Williamsburg. Even though many of my respondents indicated a willingness to use general information to supplement their interpretation of domestic service, there does seem to be a stigma attached to it. For some, the use of conjecture undermines the institution’s authority, as suggested by one respondent: “We simply do not know enough about domestic arrangements to say anything definite. As a university-affiliated museum, we are taken as ‘gospel’ and we have to be really sure of our facts before we can include anything in our tour.”

The ability to find the documented information to build these tours upon is dictated by the availability of personnel and financial resources, both of which are limited at most house museums. Many respondents commented on their desire to include domestic service in their interpretation, or to improve existing programs, but that their lack of resources prohibited it. Several indicated that the help of unpaid workers would be needed to jumpstart research and interest in the theme: "If one docent would take the lead and incorporate servants, the rest would likely join in. We are extremely short-handed all around, so an enthusiastic docent could change things for the better;" "I think the inclusion of domestic servants is an interesting idea, but realistically it probably won't happen here unless it becomes a volunteer's 'project;'" The household help—only a cook that we know of—is very poorly documented. We need either a graduate student or academic to look at two questions: the use of Chinese as domestics in California and, more specifically, how were they employed and who were they?" The first section of my survey documents the chronic problem of house museums being shorthanded, in that the paid staff tends to be lean and volunteers must fill in the gaps.⁴⁵

Conclusions

The presence of domestic servants in house museum interpretation continues to increase, although for many sites they continue to be background characters. The inclusion of domestic servants is a nod to the new social history's emphasis on race, class, and gender; however, much house museum interpretation does not significantly address many of the complex issues a more "complete" representation of domestic life would require. While there is some indication that some aspects of discussing domestic service create resistance in interpreters or visitors, lack of resources seems to be a much

greater hindrance to developing these programs. Even staff members with advanced degrees in history do not guarantee that tours will be able to incorporate a full and complex view of a house's social dynamics. At sites with small staffs, keeping the doors open and the structures stable are the most important parts of their jobs. The most successful and thorough domestic service interpretations, thus far, have developed at larger sites. They have also taken shape over substantial periods of time.

Many respondents who identified themselves as already interpreting domestic servants indicated their desire to improve their programs as personnel and financial resources become available. The general feeling of survey participants was that domestic service is an important and worthwhile subject that can provide their visitors with a more well-rounded, informative, and relevant experience of the site. While many of their responses indicated that the presence of social history-related subject matter is still superficial, the development of well-researched school programs and a general enthusiasm for the topic bodes well. As one respondent put it, "Would love to do more interpretation on the subject in the future. Social history is the main interpretive focus of our site and domestic service interpretation would fit perfectly into our current tours and special events." The sites I visited and discuss as case studies in the next chapter illustrate some of the encouraging developments to which this respondent hopes to contribute.

Notes

¹ American Association of Museums, *Museums Count* (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 1994). A three page section entitled "Highlights of Findings" provides an interesting overview of the museum population, 23-25.

² The survey/questionnaire was distributed to 200 historic houses nationwide, and a 50% return rate was achieved.

³ Patricia Chambers Walker, "A More Complete History: Interpreting Domestic Servants at Historic House Museums" (M.A. thesis, John F. Kennedy University, 1996), 212-213. It is also very difficult to obtain a copy of Walker's thesis, and I saw a need to make information on this topic more available. JFK University libraries do not allow M.A. thesis projects to circulate via interlibrary loan, and due to copyright concerns the library would not make me a copy. The address the school had for Ms. Walker was outdated. Thanks to the fact that she was a co-compiler on the *Directory of American Historic House Museums* I was able to reach her through her publisher. Once I finally made contact with her, she was very willing to provide a copy.

⁴ Patricia Chambers Walker and Thomas Graham, *Directory of Historic House Museums in the United States* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000).

⁵ I asked Peggy Whitworth, BruceMore's executive director, for her opinion on mail addressed generically to a particular title rather than a specific person. Without hesitation, she recommended using the generic salutation due to the frequency of personnel changes.

⁶ Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 133.

⁷ Walker, 139.

⁸ I did include the District of Columbia.

⁹ American Association of Museums, *Museums Count* (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 1994), 46.

¹⁰ American Association of Museums, 33.

¹¹ Peggy Coats, "Survey of Historic House Museums" *History News* 45 (January 1990), 28. Coats mailed her survey to 200 house museums selected from the American Association of Museums *Official Museum Directory* using the category HISTORY/Houses – Buildings. She achieved a 50 percent response rate.

¹² 302 sites indicated the number of full-time staff.

¹³ One-hundred-ninety-seven respondents reported the number of full-time volunteers as their site.

¹⁴ 294 respondents indicated the number of part-time volunteers at their sites.

¹⁵ Barbara Abramoff Levy, Sandra Mackenzie Lloyd, Susan Porter Schreiber, *Great Tours! Thematic Tours and Guide Training for Historic Sites* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001), 131.

¹⁶ In their essay about living-history museums, Warren Leon and Margaret Piatt discuss this problem as it relates to a prominent Wisconsin historic site. "Old World Wisconsin, which is open only seasonally, does not offer its interpreters year-round employment; many stay for just a single season. In that time, they can learn only a modest amount of the information the researchers have gathered and cannot develop a complete range of teaching techniques for presenting what they know to the public. . . . The unfortunate result is that even serious visitors to Old World Wisconsin are not likely to detect the subtle differences between cultures presented at various farms." My own visit to the site in August 1999 leads me to agree with their assessment. Warren Leon and Margaret Piatt, "Living-History Museums," in *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment*, edited by Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 80.

¹⁷ Edward M. Bruner, "Abraham Lincoln as Authentic Reproduction: A Critique of Postmodernism" *American Anthropologist* 96, no. 2 (1994): 403.

¹⁸ 248 sites indicated the number of paid guides.

¹⁹ Of a total 308 respondents reporting the makeup of their guide staff.

²⁰ Although I considered the data for all respondents in tallying the information for the first "Your Site" section; beginning with the second section "Servants at Your Site," 8.7 percent of the total returns did not fit my criteria and were not counted. The discarded sites included those with interpretive periods prior to 1865, those who functioned as something other than traditional house museums (i.e. art gallery or rental facility), and a small number that had closed to the public.

²¹ 327 sites fit the survey criteria.

²² 65.2 percent of respondents in the Western South Central region (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas) had servants during their interpretive period; 57.2 percent of those in the Basin and Plateau region (Arizona, Utah); and 25.0 percent in the non-contiguous states.

²³ I considered only respondents who answered “yes” to question six for questions seven through thirty-three. A small number of sites that answered “no” to question six answered questions intended for sites who interpret domestic service. My assumption is that servants are mentioned at these sites, but the staff does not consider them as significant parts of their interpretation. I felt it was more accurate to discard these responses when considering answers to questions seven through thirty-three.

²⁴ For each category of room, the majority has been restored as period rooms.

²⁵ Eichstedt and Small, 182.

²⁶ Walker, 159.

²⁷ Furniture, clothing and other personal items were occasionally given to servants, usually when the employer no longer had use for them. While the recipients of these presents were often grateful for a new dress or chair, some servants resented cast-offs as gifts.

²⁸ Walker, 179.

²⁹ Some excellent volumes devoted solely to domestic service include: Mary Elizabeth Carter, *Millionaire Households and their Domestic Economy* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1903); Christine Terhune Herrick, *The Expert Maid-Servant* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1904). A later reference includes a significant chapter on domestic servants, Emily Post, *Etiquette* (New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1928), 132-163.

³⁰ 68.4 percent of all sites were classified as offering in depth interpretation, compared to the 67.7 percent for free sites, 59.3 percent of slave sites, and 75.6 percent of combination sites. Walker, 189-190.

³¹ One example is Mildred Maddocks Bentley’s “The Psychology of Servants,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, December 1925, 159-162+. Bentley offers two sample schedules, one for the house with one maid, the other for the house with two maids. Women in charge of larger servant staff often found schedule recommendations in manuals such as Carter’s and Herrick’s, which are noted above.

³² Spencer R. Crew and James E. Sims, “Locating Authenticity: Fragments of a Dialogue,” in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Levine (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 172.

³³ For example, Cedar Rapids has a large and very proud community of Czech people. The Douglas family employed several Czechs at Brucemore, although not in some of the most visible and prestigious positions. One guide confessed that she felt awkward talking

about hierarchy according to ethnicity because she might offend a member of the Czech community.

³⁴ See "A Washerwoman," *Independent*, 10 November 1904, 1073-1076.

³⁵ Lillian Pettingill, *Toilers of the Home: The Record of a College Woman's Experience as a Domestic Servant* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co, 1905), 375-376.

³⁶ One respondent indicated that "We stress longevity of service of several servants (40-50 years) to indicate loyalty and good relationships."

³⁷ "Service staff were considered extended family to the founders. In the family's later years, the staff were the primary inhabitants of the house and grounds."

³⁸ Thomas J. Schlereth, "Causing Conflict, Doing Violence" *Museum News* 63 (October 1984), 47-48.

³⁹ Barbara Abramoff Levy, Sandra Mackensie Lloyd, and Susan Porter Schreiber, *Great Tours! Thematic Tours and Guide Training for Historic Sites* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001).

⁴⁰ Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, Third Edition (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 32-33.

⁴¹ Two recent anthologies about interpreting and preserving women's history include essays about domestic servants. Margaret Lynch-Brennan's "The Servant Slant: Irish Women Domestic Servants and Historic House Museums" appears in Polly Welts Kaufman and Katharine T. Corbett, ed., *Her Past Around Us: Interpreting Sites for Women's History* (Malabar, FL: Kreiger Publishing Company, 2003). Patricia West contributed "Uncovering and Interpreting Women's History at Historic House Museums" to Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman, *Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation*. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

⁴² Pettingill, 362.

⁴³ I assigned each response a weighted point value. A rating of 5 equaled 5 points, 4 equaled 4 points and on down. I divided the total by the number of responses (discounting all "non-responses") to get an average rating for each question.

⁴⁴ Walker, 206.

⁴⁵ One respondent noted, "We lack the necessary research to base a good interpretation on. Even in a university with a good history department, we lack research, and as a staff

of one, I cannot devote enough time to do all the research myself. Information in this little town is scarce.”

THE SERVANT PROBLEM:
HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUMS AND SOCIAL HISTORY

VOLUME II

by

Jennifer Christine Mach Pustz

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CHAPTER FIVE

CASE STUDIES IN SERVANT INTERPRETATION

As the responses to my survey illustrate, historic house museums face formidable challenges when incorporating servants into their interpretation. Yet, several sites have made significant progress despite limited funding, small staffs, and meager site-specific information about servants. Each house museum has unique circumstances that affect the way domestic service is interpreted. While no “one-size-fits-all” solution to the house museum’s “servant problem” exists, a sampling of techniques used by various homes, each with its own strengths and weaknesses, presents a range of resources and styles of interpretation. This chapter outlines the approaches taken by a handful of sites, most from the same region and time period, each with successes and challenges from which to learn.

Methodology

My case studies are drawn from a series of site visits made between June 2000 and June 2003. I selected the museums primarily based on indications that tours addressed domestic service. Several were recommended by colleagues at other historic houses, others reported domestic service as an interpretive theme in the *Directory of Historic House Museums in the United States* (1999).¹ I chose some because of their proximity to me, the majority of these sites are located in the Midwest, but also because this region has several house museums that are well-known for their interpretation of domestic servants. Others have the potential to become model sites for interpreting servants.

The case study sites are drawn from the same population that participated in my mail survey, those that interpret domestic service in periods after 1865. Viewing sites of roughly the same historical period made it somewhat easier to compare what I experienced at one site with another. Most of my visits were unannounced so that I would have the greatest possibility of seeing the “typical” tour. During an early round of visits, I made arrangements to speak with site personnel, which in several cases appeared to skew the tour toward a heavy emphasis on servants. In at least two cases, the guide knew of my interest in servants beforehand. My husband and I were the only people on one tour, and the guide specifically noted my interest in servants and tailored her tour to that interest. These situations did offer me a good sense of the depth of the sites’ knowledge of domestic service and the possibilities for discussing it on their tours, but they were not representative of a general visitor’s experience. From that point on, I decided to blend into the crowd to have a more typical experience. My visits followed the same course as those conducted by Jennifer Eichstedt, Steven Small, and their graduate students while conducting research for the book *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (2002). Eichstedt and Small identify their methodology as participant observation, and their objective to “see what was included in a regular tour” is the approach I took for the majority of my “field research.”² In addition to taking the guided tour, I also viewed any exhibits at the site, toured the grounds, collected brochures or other complimentary materials, and visited the museum store, which frequently is a good indicator of the site’s self-image.

I have not included detailed discussions of all my site visits, but instead focus on those that are exceptional or representative of a specific “style” of interpreting servants.

The additional visits informed my overall impression of domestic service interpretation.³ I also communicated with several staff members at sites that I have not been able to visit, but who provided extensive material about the role of servants in their interpretive programs.

I also include Brucemore as one of my case studies, the site where I have worked since 1998. While it may be fairly argued that I am less able to be objective about an institution where I have played an integral role in creating interpretation of domestic servants, my experience provides a narrative of the “insider’s” view of house museum administration. I attempt to be as impartial as possible, as I recognize the varied levels of success my work has had at Brucemore.

I have also had the good fortune to see the beginnings of some excellent new interpretations in progress. Mayslake, a site in suburban Chicago, was saved from the wrecking ball only recently and is in the process of defining its interpretive themes and goals. One of the staff’s primary interests is in the working part of the household. Maymont, a Gilded Age mansion in Richmond, Virginia, has been open to the public for many years, but in the last twenty staff have focused on learning more about the domestic servants and their basement work areas. Their ambitious restoration and detailed interpretation of the downstairs realm is now in sight with an anticipated opening in 2005. Maymont’s significant contribution to the interpretation of domestic service will join a host of other sites in the North and South that take this side of their story seriously.

Architectural Evidence and Unfurnished Business

Fine furniture and *objects d’art* are typically the centerpieces of house museum interpretation, but at the James J. Hill House in St. Paul, Minnesota the lack of these

artifacts is actually an asset. While rare and expensive artifact collections frequently attract visitors, without them the guides must mine information from the primary artifact – the house itself. Empty rooms challenge guides to think beyond the inventory and random family anecdotes. Although the imposing forty-two-room Richardsonian Romanesque mansion on St. Paul's fashionable Summit Street is nearly empty of furniture, its impressive servants quarters and mechanical systems provide the basis for a fascinating tale of family and servant life. Without furniture and art objects to distract the visitor, guides turn to the social history of the house.

James J. Hill, who would become known as the "Empire Builder," earned his wealth through shipping and transportation ventures. When he arrived in Saint Paul in 1856, Hill was seventeen years old, and had only recently left his native Canada. He started as a riverboat shipping clerk, but the railroad business made him rich. He and several partners purchased a bankrupt railroad in 1878, extended the tracks north to Canada, and reorganized it as the St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba, later known as the Great Northern Railroad. During Hill's lifetime, the railroad reached the Pacific and made St. Paul a major transportation and wholesale center.⁴ In 1888, Hill hired Peabody, Stearns, and Furber of Boston and St. Louis to design a new monumental residence for his family. Hill, his wife Mary Theresa Mehegan Hill, and their ten children lived at the Summit Street house between 1891 and 1921.⁵ In 1925, four years after Mary Hill's death, four of her daughters gave the estate to the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Church officials used the house as an office building until the Archdiocese consolidated its offices in 1978, at which point the house was offered to the Minnesota Historical Society.⁶

Before the house even opened to the public, plans for interpreting the site and its working inhabitants were described in print. An article in the AASLH publication *History News* highlighted the Hill House and the Raynham Hall Museum in Oyster Bay, New York as “good examples of the way interpretation has changed to incorporate the social history movement and to shed light on the other side.”⁷ Elizabeth Doermann, an early administrator at the Hill House, noted that some staff favored the “great man” approach, others the social history approach.⁸ After this initial disagreement, concern for interpreting the lives of *all* the Hill House’s residents became a priority.

The first staff planned a unique audiovisual program to illustrate the work of preparing and serving meals, both in the family and servant dining rooms, which was described in the *History News* feature:

In the dining room, [visitors] will see the slide production of the Hill family and guests at dinner. The table covered with a white cloth, will double as a screen for slides projected either from boxes in the ceiling or rear view projection equipment between the table and cloth. No faces will be shown. Only hands and tableware and the meal itself. Conversation will be played over tape equipment. . . . After ‘eavesdropping’ on the diners visitors will proceed through the breakfast room and butler’s pantry before descending to the basement and the servants’ dining room. There they will see and hear the servants at dinner through a similar audiovisual production.⁹

These programs were to contrast the daily life of the family with that of the servants, and offered the potential of bringing the accented speech of foreign servants into the tour.

The audiovisual program as described in the article was a fascinating concept and reflects some of the early conceptualization of servant vs. employer interpretation, but ultimately it was not installed. To do so would have required drilling into original woodwork and other elements, which was deemed too invasive. The staff also had concerns that being stuck with the program would be too limiting over time and that relying on this

equipment could lead to continual maintenance issues.¹⁰ This example illustrates the compromises that are often required when installing technical interpretive components. Interpretive plans must be weighed against the physical impact and long-range goals.

The interpretive tour of the Hill House gradually expanded over time. Originally visitors toured only the ground floor and basement; today they see all three main floors and the basement, which provides them with a thorough view of the role of servants in the Hill household. Guides describe the roles of servants in both the family and servants' areas of the house: a servant stood behind the Christmas tree with a pail of water after the candles were lit; a signal on the pipe organ alerted a servant in the basement to pump the bellows; and a cook or maid earned \$5 to \$7 a week versus the \$1 an hour earned by the woodcarver who crafted the elaborate carvings found in the main hall.¹¹ Noting the presence of servants throughout the house instead of just in their work and living areas reminds visitors that servants, especially in a large house like the Hills', were literally everywhere.

At many sites, unfurnished servants' rooms have a barren feeling compared to spaces filled with furniture on the family side. At the Hill House, the emptiness of *all* the rooms allows for consistent interpretation throughout the residence. The third-floor servants' rooms have pine finishes and simple trim. The bedrooms have many windows, one with a view of the Saint Paul Cathedral, which prompts the story of a head cook who married one of the Cathedral's construction workers. Despite the many windows, the rooms have the odd shapes and slanted ceilings typical of top-floor servant bedrooms. Two servants shared each room and Mrs. Hill hung a plaque stating their duties on the wall, which provided a constant reminder of their work even during their personal time.

These plaques are not present today, but if it were possible to replicate them, they would further emphasize the family's control of the servants' lives.

The basement working spaces are particularly revealing locations to describe the labor necessary to run such a large household [Figures B-80 and B-81]. A large kitchen provides an opportunity to discuss two of the cooks who worked for the Hills, Celia Tauer and Lena Peterson, both of whom are well-documented. The working areas are integrated with several staff common areas, reminding visitors that servants were part of a separate community within the household. The servants' hall provided a place for leisure, as evident in a humorous anecdote about cook Lena's three suitors who all called on the same evening. A well-equipped laundry room is a testament to the backbreaking nature of the labor, which may have contributed to the surly personality of Irish laundress Helen Murphy. Throughout the tour, one is continually reminded of the intertwined lives of these very different groups of people, not only the differences between upstairs and downstairs, but the variety of personalities living and working together as a staff.

A newly-opened historic house, also unfurnished, hopes to similarly interpret the lifestyle of the upper class and their servants by using the architecture of the house and general information about both sides of the household. Little is known about the activities of wealthy coal baron Francis Stuyvesant Peabody during his brief residence at the sprawling Mayslake Estate in Hinsdale, Illinois. The Queen Anne style house was completed in 1921 and Peabody died in 1922 during a hunt on the grounds. Two years later, his heirs sold the estate to the Franciscan Province of the Sacred Heart, which added a chapel and a Friary and used the mansion as a Retreat House for nearly seventy years. During this time, the order sold most of the original 848 acres; currently the house

sits on the remaining ninety acres of prime real estate in the heart of Chicago's western suburbs. In 1991, unable to afford the property's upkeep, the Franciscans were on the verge of selling it to a developer who planned to raze the buildings and replace them with luxury homes. A coalition of conservationists, preservationists, and DuPage County residents formed to save the property. In 1992, voters passed a referendum for the Forest Preserve District to purchase Mayslake. Ten years later, the mansion opened for tours and research and interpretive plans were underway.¹²

Thus far, staff and volunteers at Mayslake are taking a generalist approach to interpreting the main house. They take what they do know about Peabody and apply it to architectural features, and fill the story out with general material about the upper-class lifestyle of the early 1920s. The tensions between the wealthy and their laborers have great potential as a theme for Mayslake. Peabody's ownership of coal mines and company towns in an atmosphere of labor unrest resulted in a paranoia that is manifested in several architectural features. Peabody had a bell mounted on top of the house so he could alert surrounding farmers if he was in need of help. A secret passageway in the study leads to a "safe room" in the basement. The entrance to this passageway was locked and concealed by a false cabinet to keep servants from finding the hiding place. The relationships between industrialists and laborers whose work created the fortunes behind grand estates are rarely addressed in historic house museums, and Mayslake's specific architectural curiosities suggest a rare opportunity to highlight this aspect of history. To do it well, however, would require additional interpretation of Peabody as a businessman and specific examples of his ruthlessness that would have resulted in his need for safety precautions at the house. Industrial versus domestic labor could also be a

fascinating interpretive theme, particularly since factories competed for the labor of women who might otherwise become servants.

Current interpretive plans highlight the servant's role in the household. Research recommendations prepared by consultants Emily J. Harris and Jean L. Guarino in March 2002 focus heavily on Mayslake's potential interpretation of domestic service.¹³

Architectural oddities on the servants' side of the house offer insights into the hierarchies that existed among large servant staffs. The servants' bedrooms at Mayslake, for example, become progressively smaller and sparser, most likely reflecting each person's "rank" in the staff. This wing also features gradual steps down as one progresses from the larger to the smaller rooms, perhaps another indication of the many steps on the social ladder between the head housekeeper and a scullery maid.

Since so much of the "upstairs" interpretation at Mayslake will focus on non-site specific information about upper-class life of the period, rather than information particular to the Peabodys, the owners of Mayslake will essentially be on equal footing with the servants from an interpretive perspective. Thus, this site has the potential to become a model for exploring the social history of its era from several points of view. Although the staff of Mayslake does not have the wealth of documentary sources the James J. Hill House enjoys, both houses share fascinating architectural features that can easily take center stage when artifacts and documents are not available to move the narrative. House museum personnel frequently cite the lack of artifacts related to servants as a reason for not interpreting domestic servants or doing it in a limited capacity. The Hill House and Mayslake serve as examples of how such obstacles can be not only overcome, but turned into assets.

Servants in Leading Roles

Historic houses often utilize their interiors for bringing stories of domestic servants to life. Dramatic presentations appear to be quite popular with visitors; at Colonial Williamsburg, a slate of dramatic “evening programs” regularly sells out. While many sites use first-person interpretation during the guided tour to allow different members of the household to present their impressions of the house, some have created scripted performances based on site documentation that feature servants in prominent roles.

The Hill House may be unfurnished, but the site is still able to populate the rooms and halls with servants that are as three-dimensional as their employers. After becoming a public historic site, a handful of former Hill House servants participated in oral history interviews and offered their photographs and personal documents for study. The most creative way of sharing their stories is the program “Hill House Holidays,” a very popular play performed in the mansion each holiday season. Visitors are asked to assume the role of an applicant for a waitress position at the Hill House. The audience follows the actors, who portray various documented Hill House servants, through the rooms on the first floor and basement as they prepare the house for a holiday party. Each room offers the actors an opportunity to discuss how the family and servants related to the space and a setting for introducing other servant “characters” who would have worked there.

“Hill House Holidays” is a lighthearted production full of humorous stories told by the servants about their misadventures and interactions with their employers. When new servant characters are introduced to the audience, an actor reads from a “biography book,” which includes information such as the servants’ ethnic background, duties, and

personality traits. Stories about servant life at the Hill House gathered from oral histories and other research are also integrated into the narrative. When Jack Hasslen is introduced as he hangs paintings in the picture gallery, he relates the following story:

Nothing so unnerving as having Jim Hill fix his glare on you while you do your job. . . . Finally I got 'em [the new paintings from Paris] all straight and perfect. Hill was feeling good, and it looked like he was going to give me a tip. He was wearing a white vest with four white pockets, and he reached into one and came out with a \$20 bill. That must have been too much for me. He put it back. He pulled out some \$10 bills, and shoved them back in his pockets, too. He found a \$50 and more \$20s, and finally gave up trying to find a \$1 bill, so he patted me on the shoulder and said, 'Very satisfactory indeed' . . . and left.¹⁴

Following Jack's speech, the action freezes and another servant reads from the biography book about the story's source, an interview with Jack published in the *Minneapolis Tribune* in 1980. The biographical note also mentions that Jack got work for his sister Clara as a pantry maid, and throughout the production her character fantasizes about what it must be like to be peers of the Hills, to the extent that she neglects her duties. The Hills are never seen during the production; but occasionally Mrs. Hill's voice is heard gently scolding Clara for forgetting her work. "Hill House Holidays" effectively reverses the traditional turn-of-the-century household by bringing the activities of the workers into the spotlight and relegating the owner families to off-stage voices.¹⁵

The more difficult aspects of servant life are relayed through the "job interview." Since the actors interact with the audience as if they were seeking a job in the Hill household, throughout the program they make reference to some of the less appealing aspects of servant life and the expectations that Mrs. Hill has for her staff. At the beginning of the program, the "guide" (who acts as a narrator of sorts) tells the audience, "So, if you are looking for long hours, low pay, and no benefits . . . you've come to the right place."¹⁶ Once the group has reached the servants' realm downstairs, the characters

reveal more about the expectations Mrs. Hill has by sharing her interview questions, putting visitors to work peeling apples and potatoes, and looking at their hands for signs that they are used to demanding labor. Although the program as a whole provides an upbeat picture of servant life at the Hill House, the hardships are shown to lurk just beneath the surface. A twelve-person servant staff shared both the good and bad parts of their lives and work with each other, and "Hill House Holidays" capably incorporates personal anecdotes to remind visitors that although work was hard, within their "community" some prospects for enjoyment existed.

As my survey respondents indicated, some sites use first-person interpretation (in which the guide assumes a historical persona) for tours and special programs. While not technically "theater," this technique incorporates theatrical elements (in fact many such interpreters have previous theater experience), although unlike the Hill House program, it is improvised rather than scripted, which allows for greater spontaneity between guides and visitors. The Alexander Ramsey House, like the Hill House, its sister site in St. Paul, uses first-person interpretation to introduce the stories of domestic servants, many researched quite thoroughly in a Master's thesis by a student in the Cooperstown Graduate Program.¹⁷ Servants' work and living spaces are part of the tour, and a kitchen interpretation program brings one aspect of domestic service to life.

The typical Ramsey House experience begins with a short video about the home's original resident, Alexander Ramsey, Minnesota's first territorial governor and second state governor. The video concentrates on his political career, much of which was rather shady. It does not hide the fact that Ramsey basically cheated local Native Americans and participated in other kinds of political corruption. His life at the house is discussed

only at the end of the video, specifically that his widowed daughter eventually took over the house and passed it on to her two unmarried daughters, who gave it to the Minnesota Historical Society (which Ramsey had played an integral role in founding) in 1964. The video, at the time of my visit, appeared to be several years old both in its graphics and visual style; its content focused heavily on Ramsey as a politician without connecting that aspect of his life to the house. However, the video's frankness about Ramsey's political chicanery presented a side of the patriarch that is usually ignored at historic houses.

After the video, a costumed guide escorts groups through the house. During my visit, the guide wore the black and white dress of a servant. Although all guides wear period costumes, not all are dressed as servants. Using third-person interpretation, she led us through a variety of family spaces and areas used by servants as work or living areas. Unlike the Hill House, the Ramsey house is fully furnished on both the family and servant sides; however, the guide did an excellent job avoiding trivial details about the objects, instead using them to illustrate broader social themes. The furnishings in the servants' bedroom are based on conjecture, but one of the Ramsey House servants originally owned the dress lying on the bed.

In the kitchen, we were greeted by Annie, the cook, who was in the process of making cookies from one of Mrs. Ramsey's recipes (which she offered us to nibble on during her presentation). Annie talked about scientific management in the kitchen as endorsed by Catherine Beecher and explained how the call bell panel that summoned servants worked. She also described the labor-saving advantages of the ice box and the privilege of access to the latest technology. Although Annie gave an informative overview of a cook's experiences of the period, she did not take advantage of the

opportunities to address the complexities of some of the objects she pointed out. For example, the call bell panel could prompt a description of how she or other servants felt about the disruption of being called in the middle of a task, and always being at the beck and call of their employers. The ice-box could provide a chance to question to what extent such labor-saving devices actually eased servants' work, or increased it by raising expectations of their productiveness.¹⁸ It is possible that other first-person interpreters in the kitchen (not always Annie, sometimes there is a family member looking for one of the servants) do address these issues since most historic houses face the problem of variable content on their tours.

The first-person interpretation is relatively successful at the Ramsey House, and certainly has the potential to be enhanced at this site and adapted by others. One of its great advantages is its ability to bring life into what are usually static spaces. Historic house museums tend to be very "hands-off" places, so the activity and aromas produced in the kitchen program engage senses normally dormant during a guided tour. On a basic level, the visitor is reminded that this house was lived in as a home, something easily forgotten when viewing rooms from behind ropes or Plexiglas barriers. The kitchen program focuses on tasks that are easy for the visitor to relate to, but the danger is that it can easily become influenced by nostalgia. First-person interpretations tend to be task-based demonstrations of baking, making candles, sewing, or other activities that often lead visitors to think that the past was a "simpler" time, despite the intentions of the interpreters. These presentations can address much more than how servants did their work, including how they felt about it, how it segregated them from the family, and how their status as servants affected their relationships overall.

The performance-based interpretations at the Hill House and Ramsey House have advantages and disadvantages, particularly when the two approaches are compared. Scripted programs like “Hill House Holidays” have the benefit of being more predictable: the actors are more likely to be trained, which usually means higher-quality performances, and the use of a script ensures consistent content. The kitchen program at the Ramsey House is a slice of what a visitor experiences on a grand scale at living history sites like Conner Prairie and Colonial Williamsburg and is less overwhelming from the visitor’s perspective. One benefit of confining the living history interpretation to one room is that the regular tour guide (speaking from the perspective of the present) has the opportunity to fill in the historical context and use the character interpreter’s presentation to describe changes over time. Both examples of performance tend to be very popular with visitors, but the issue of whether such programs are educational or strictly entertaining is often debated among museum personnel and academic historians, which will be addressed in greater detail in a later section.

Drawing out information from the site’s architecture and using theatrical portrayals and first-person interpretation are some basic techniques used to introduce domestic servants into a house museum’s narrative. All provide new intellectual challenges for interpreters and visitors, and have been implemented successfully at several historic houses. The biggest hurdle is often finding enough information about specific servants, or domestic service in general to build new programs. Three sites, each at a different stage in the development of domestic service interpretation, offer examples of how their specific resources have been used to give visitors ways of seeing historic houses through the lens of social history.

Villa Louis

Located on the banks of the Mississippi River in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, Villa Louis is an impressive country estate where many of the above techniques have been adopted and others have been attempted. Milwaukee architect E. Townsend Mix designed the main residence for H. Louis Dousman, son of a prominent fur trader and entrepreneur, and his mother in 1870. Although the Dousmans were the only family to occupy Villa Louis, their residence was sporadic. When Louis Dousman married Nina Linn Sturgis in 1872, the couple moved to St. Louis to live and start their family. Upon the death of his mother ten years later, the Dousmans moved back to Prairie du Chien. Louis died in 1886, one year after his wife directed an impressive redecoration of the home. Nina and the five Dousman children left the estate for New York, returning in 1893 after the annulment of Nina's second marriage.

The Villa Louis staff has selected 1893 to 1898 as its interpretive period, a time when the estate reached its zenith in development. This was also a time of great activity for Nina and her children, who entertained frequently with the hope of securing appropriate marriage partners for the children.¹⁹ The Dousman heirs married and moved to other cities, which marked the beginning of a long transitional period for the estate. Between 1913 and 1951, it was used as a boys' school, a boarding house, and a city-run historic site focusing on the Villa's antebellum history (Villa Louis had replaced the earlier "House on the Mound," built by Louis Dousman's father before the Civil War).²⁰ Finally, in 1952, Villa Louis became Wisconsin's first state historic site and remains under the State Historical Society of Wisconsin's governance today.

Villa Louis has excellent documentation and collections from its interpretive period, including archival photographs, family and business-related documents, and 90 percent of the home's original furnishings.²¹ A multi-million dollar restoration of the home's interiors has recaptured its Victorian glory and 1885 William Morris-inspired British Arts-and-Crafts décor.²² The site's interpretation of both family and servants also benefits from having good primary sources on hand.

Visitors to Villa Louis experience the mansion through a guided tour led by a costumed interpreter using the third-person technique.²³ Guides begin tours in the Dousman Office Building, known to the family as "The Cottage," which includes the estate manager's office, the billiard room, and second floor guest rooms (not included on the tour). The tour proceeds to the mansion's front door, where guides describe the custom of social calling and the social activities that took place on this large front porch. The main floor has been completely restored, and visitors may look into the parlor, sitting room, dining room, and guest bedroom over Plexiglas barriers. The family bedrooms on the second floor are in the process of restoration. Visitors also view these rooms from behind a low wall where they find interpretive panels about the rooms' residents. The bathroom and the bedroom of Penelope F. McLeod, the head housekeeper, are located on this floor, around the corner from family bedrooms. A reading rail label with a photo of the rather dour Miss McLeod tells the visitor: "She directed the day to day activities of the five to six servants that made up the household staff and in absence of the Dousman family, represented them in making decisions regarding the domestic sphere of the estate." The label also indicates the privileged position of Miss McLeod among the staff as indicated by the location of her room in the family wing.

From McLeod's room, the visitors continue down the hall and take two steps down into the servants wing, which includes two bedrooms, linen closets, a sink in the hall and a commode in a closet. Both servants' bedrooms are appropriately furnished and have been since the 1980s.²⁴ The furnishings are simple, the walls plainly painted, and the floor nearly bare. One room is identified as female servants' quarters, the other simply as servant quarters, but likely housed women. Visitors can enter the female servants' quarters, although their movements are limited by stanchions, they have more access than they do the restored family areas, which must be viewed from outside the doorways. Allowing visitors to enter the servants' rooms, however, suggests that their contents are of less value than those in the family rooms, even if this is not the conscious intention.

The room's two stanchions have text labels mounted as reading rails that address two perspectives on servant life. One combines material specific to the Villa Louis with general information:

Domestic servants cooked, cleaned, served meals, answered the doors and generally attended to the daily needs of the family and guests. At various times the staff included a housekeeper, butler, cook, upstairs maid, waitress, nurse and perhaps a cook's assistance [sic]. The work was physically demanding, the hours were long and the rate of pay was low (servants wages in this household averaged \$8.00 a month between 1888 and 1900).²⁵

This passage does describe the basic duties of servants and the specialization that one found in a large household, and while it does address the fact that servants were overworked and underpaid, the mention of the specific wages paid by the Dousmans is somewhat meaningless without some context. It would be helpful for the visitor to know how this wage compared with that of servants in other households or other parts of the country, or what servants could have bought with their \$8 per month. By using period

newspapers to find out what necessities sold for at the time, one might be able to determine what level of material comfort these servants enjoyed (also taking in consideration the fact that their room and board was provided by their employers). Another useful comparison would be the wages unskilled women earned in other trades, such as factory work. This information can often be found in reports of state bureaus of labor statistics.

The label on the other stanchion, which includes an excerpt from a Norwegian servant's letter, presumably to family across the ocean, is slightly ambiguous in meaning. She states that "here in this country we don't need to sit up and toil and work all the long winter nights until we are so sleepy we almost faint. . . . at most places, the hired girls have almost the whole afternoon free, that is to say, after they have washed up in the afternoon until it is time for supper."²⁶ While this servant comments on the availability of leisure time in the United States compared to Norway, she qualifies having "the whole afternoon free" with a more specific statement hinting that in reality hired girls had less than their whole afternoon to themselves. However, the letter's upbeat tone provides balance to the companion label, indicating that the individual perceptions of domestic servants varied greatly. The tone could indicate that the writer was putting a good spin on what may really have been an unpleasant situation for the family's sake, but it also may signify a difference in an immigrant's perspective of domestic service. An American-born girl may have grown up believing that domestic service was undesirable, while in some European countries this stigma did not exist. Joy Lintelman's research on Swedish-American domestic servants suggests that Swedish women frequently chose this work without suffering the social stigma perceived by American girls. Wages and

working conditions were better in the United States than in Sweden, and the Swedish-American community provided strong support for their “serving sisters.”²⁷ To describe the advantages and disadvantages of domestic service does not require one to interpret this job as “good” or “bad” since each servant experienced it differently.

Visitors take the very narrow tunnel-like servants’ stairs down to the kitchen, where they find that a costumed interpreter has fired up the stove. Like the Ramsey House, upon which the Villa’s kitchen interpretation is modeled, the guide is in costume, but during regular tours she uses third-person interpretation.²⁸ The “cook” describes what she is in the process of making, and gives the group an overview of the activities that would have taken place in the kitchen, including the preparation of six meals a day, three meals for the family, three for the servants, following two different menus and using different cuts of meat. She continues, describing the contents of the butler’s pantry, adjacent to the kitchen. The kitchen is full of period utensils, plates of imitation food for display, and an open period cookbook, providing visitors with a peek at historical recipes. A small table and chairs in the back of the room is set for the servants’ meal.

The kitchen interpreter also encourages visitors to look into room of butler Louis LeBrun, a former indentured servant from Canada who worked for the Dousman family for over fifty years. Of particular interest is a large chest of silver with the top open so visitors may see the contents. One of LeBrun’s primary duties was care of the silver, a task he took very seriously. His room also includes wall-to-wall ingrain carpet (the servant bedrooms above have only area rugs), a double bed, rocking chair, and pleasant floral wallpaper. The interpreter in the kitchen also points out that LeBrun’s room is close to two of his most important work places, the dining room and the pantry.

Although the quality of his furnishings and important responsibilities indicate LeBrun's higher status among the servants at the Villa, he too was never far from his work.

Throughout the standard house tour, McLeod and LeBrun serve as reminders that a hierarchy governed the community of domestic servants and influenced relationships with their employers.²⁹

Exiting from the kitchen, visitors have the opportunity to look at exhibits in the Preserve House, directly behind the main house. From the outside, one can look into the preserve kitchen, where servants canned and preserved produce. Inside the building are two exhibits. One room houses equipment from the Laundry Building (which still exists but is not open to the public) [Figure B-82]. Its label explains that site archives indicate that some servants lived here, but various modifications over the years have made determining the building's original floorplan difficult.

Across the hall is a self-guided exhibition, "Laundress, Nursemaid, Coachman, Cook: Keeping House at the Villa Louis."³⁰ This one-room exhibition of photographs and charts introduces visitors to the many servants known to have lived and worked at the Villa and their world; at the same time, though, it acknowledges the paucity of this information. The title and opening label emphasize the need for a large specialized staff at a country estate like Villa Louis and lists the many kinds of servants needed on a daily, seasonal, or monthly basis. Most of the wall next to this label features a very large reproduction of Charles van Shaick's photograph of Norwegian domestics from Black River Falls, Wisconsin [Figure B-39 and Figure B-83], which further underscores the variety of specialized servants listed in the title, even though these were not servants from Villa Louis, as the label admits. The Van Shaick photograph is arresting when presented

nearly life-size, although evidence of the photographer's use of a "stage set" or backdrop has been cropped out of the frame. The accompanying label encourages the visitor to consider the kinds of additional workers that were needed outside of the home. However, the complexity of this image is not addressed or presented to the viewer for contemplation. Visitors might be asked to think, for example, about the reasons an employer would want to have a posed photo taken of their servants, the conflation of the real and ideal in the image, and what the photograph suggests about the people in the picture or the person who commissioned it. The visual impact of this large image against a stark white wall draws visitors in, but misses the chance to engage the visitor in the deeper issues involved with the visual representation of servants.

The wall facing the Van Shaick photograph features an arrangement of five photos with interpretive labels and a series of lists [Figures B-84 and B-85]. A visitor starting from the far left encounters the photographs after another brief introduction, which again highlights the variety within the servants' world: "In a well-run Victorian household, each domestic servant had a specific job description that also carried a status of rank. This status was reflected in the work they did, the clothes they wore, the salary they were paid and the quarters they were assigned to live in." A bulleted list illustrates the differences between different categories of servants (i.e. house servants of various levels and grounds staff) according to where they would have lived on the estate. The label below it describes specific servants on the Villa Louis staff that had positions close to the family, the head housekeeper and the butler:

While many servants worked for a year or more and then moved on, others worked for decades. Penelope McLeod and Louis LeBrun were buried alongside the family in the Dousman cemetery plot. Domestic servants were so integrated into the Dousman's daily living routine that their images were

frequently captured by the Dousman's Kodak while their studio portraits were lovingly preserved in family albums.

A framed studio portrait of estate manager Peter Nolan introduces a staff member found only at large country estates such as Villa Louis. An Irish immigrant, Nolan managed the estate and supervised construction during its Artesian Stock Farm phase, in which Louis Dousman started a horse-breeding farm to serve the horse racing market. After leaving the family's employ, Nolan was elected Crawford County Clerk, and the Dousmans continued to hold him in high regard, so much so that after his death from tuberculosis, they held his wake in the Villa Louis parlor.

To Nolan's right are two photographs, one possibly of Barbara Hagene, a nurse or domestic servant, the other of Fred Standorf, a groundskeeper and stablehand. The identity of Barbara Hagene is described as somewhat speculative based on its identification in the Dousman family album as "Barbara holding Florence." As the stablehand, Standorf is posed in front of the Dousman's stable with four of the family horses. His employment spanned the end of the Dousman era and the beginning of its varied post-family uses. Standorf is also credited with saving livestock when a fire destroyed the stable not long after the photograph was taken.

The final two photographs are of the aforementioned Louis LeBrun and Penelope F. McLeod [Figures B-86 and B-87]. LeBrun casually stands holding a watering can in the garden while Miss McLeod looks rather severe in her studio portrait. Labels describe their duties, their long tenures that spanned two generations of Dousmans, and their interment in the Dousman family burial plot. Their personalities are also implied. LeBrun "appears in numerous family photographs, and was obviously well-loved by the Dousmans. He was usually photographed with one or more of the family dogs."

McLeod's stern and orderly appearance is accentuated by a Dousman cousin's memory that "[Miss McLeod] was always counting linen and running and doing things and telling the maids what to do."

In these very brief sketches, LeBrun and McLeod are identified as Canadian and Scottish, respectively. A series of charts grouped to the right of the photographs illustrate the diversity of the Villa Louis servants, noting that: "Young, old, female, diligent, lazy, their birth countries spanned the map of Northern Europe and Canada, but all called the Villa Louis home." Census records, household accounts, and family recollections are identified as the sources of this information; however, the panel also indicates that this work is not complete and queries "can you help recover lost names and the stories that go with them?" The open-endedness of this label makes an important point about history research – it is never complete, and any visitor has the potential to add another piece to puzzle.³¹ The lists also emphasize the heterogeneity of a large estate's servant staff. During my first tour of Villa Louis, the guide mentioned while in the servants' bedroom that two servants from countries at war with one another might be asked to share a room or even a bed. A similar statement in the exhibit labels would have added another hint of the complexity within the backstairs community.

The location of this small exhibition in the preserve house makes it fairly convenient for visitors. The building is located just behind the kitchen door where the tour exits, and curiosity seems to draw visitors in. During one of my visits, a mother read the labels aloud to her child and explained them to her, which led them to spending a fair amount of time with the material. This is a very simple display, most components were likely produced in-house, and it does not incorporate flashy interactive devices. Whether

visitors appreciate the display's quiet dignity is known only to them, but the opportunity to learn more about servants at Villa Louis is made available and accessible should they wish to explore this topic.

The standard tour of Villa Louis offers visitors many opportunities to learn about the servant staff that was the backbone of life at the estate and to see where they lived and worked. Having furnished servant bedrooms and a working period kitchen are definite advantages, even if they are based on general rather than specific information. The photographs on labels for Miss McLeod and Louis LeBrun's bedrooms also give faces to some of the names in the house. The establishment of the hierarchy on the servants' side suggests the social divisions that existed even among the working classes, and adds a layer of complexity to the house's story.

Servants' Tours of Villa Louis

While a regular tour of Villa Louis offers considerable information about the site's domestic servants, the staff has also experimented with tours that focus specifically on servant life. This is true at a number of sites that have developed tours interpreting the site through the eyes of servants, and these offer the best visitor experiences of servant work and life.³² In June 2000, I visited the Villa to take the special servants' tour, offered the first Saturday in June, July, and August. This was the second, and as of this writing, the last, time the Villa offered these tours. Due to major state budget cuts, this and other programs could no longer be supported. Villa Louis staff hope that when economic conditions improve, they will be able to offer them again.

Guides at Villa Louis are typically dressed in period costume; however, on this occasion, they wore the afternoon livery of a chamber or parlormaid, a long black dress

with white apron, cuffs, collars, and caps [Figure B-88]. Other modifications were made to the standard tour: all rooms—both servant and family sides—were interpreted from the servant's perspective, and the tour flow was reversed to feature the servants' spaces first and family spaces last. Three first-person vignettes further illustrated different aspects of servant life. Overall, the Villa Louis servants' tour effectively described servant life by giving visitors more opportunities to understand some of its nuances.

During house tours at most sites, guides do not address the servant's perspective until they reach the kitchen, laundry, or servants' bedrooms. The servants typically become invisible again when the group moves into the family space (although the Hill and Ramsey Houses attempt to overcome this problem). This was not the case on the Villa's servants' tour. The viewpoint of the servant shaped the interpretation of all rooms in the mansion. On the second floor, an "upstairs maid" would have tended to the personal needs of her employers, in addition to making beds, dusting and other straightening. The front hall is typical of the Victorian era, replete with many patterns, textures, and bric-a-brac, all of which required careful dusting. The etiquette of servers and served also came into play: when serving tea in the parlor, how would a servant be expected to interact with the guests? In all of the family areas, the guide emphasized that while the arranged objects may have been purchased and used by the Villa's owners, they did not have complete control over their treasures. This perception employs Barbara Carson's method of "perspectivist history," in which artifacts can be interpreted from the point of view of all who came in contact with them.³³ This aspect of the tour also brought visitors in touch with the reality that these items may have been beautiful to look

at, but those who had to care for them may have seen them differently since some required extra care, concern, or labor to maintain.

Reversing the order that visitors encounter the mansion's servant and family spaces contributed significantly to the tour's effectiveness. Most importantly, it allowed plenty of time for thorough interpretation of domestic service, something that is often neglected since service areas tend to be the last rooms usually visited. A respondent to Patricia Walker's survey of house museums noted this problem: "The work and sleeping quarters don't come first on the tour and if visitors want more than the usual information on the first rooms time restrictions may limit or nullify the later information."³⁴ During the servants' tour I attended, it was the family spaces that had to be viewed at a more rapid pace.

While the majority of the narrative was presented in third-person, in three locations the group encountered first-person vignettes. En route to the servants' entrance of the mansion, the group stopped at the estate manager's office where they met an interpreter portraying Daniel H. Quilligan. Quilligan offered his impression of Villa Louis as a whole, not just as a fancy residence, but as a country estate complete with farms and, at one point, a major horse breeding operation. The Dousmans also owned other properties and downtown rentals, which Quilligan managed. He also looked after the house and grounds when the Dousmans were away, a rather frequent occurrence. Even when the family left to spend a summer or winter away, some servants or other estate employees usually remained behind to keep things in order. Quilligan spoke of the Dousmans' financial difficulties, noting that "Mrs. Dousman has no head for business." Therefore, he suggested that they may have to sell the farms. Quilligan illustrated that he

has intimate knowledge of the family's finances, but he did not elaborate on how he felt about them as employers.

Upon entering the house through the back entrance, the group started the mansion tour in the kitchen, where they met the cook, Miss Hoffman (not a historic character but a generic persona with the surname of the woman portraying her). The cook's mood was a bit testy, due to her frustration with Katy the Irish scullery maid, who quit in a hurry and absconded with Miss Hoffman's cornucopia mold, which she was in need of at that moment. She explained that she had the benefit of a very modern kitchen with running water, and cold storage in a building nearby, and that because the family can buy their bread in town, she is spared of that duty. Miss Hoffman's interpretation covered the same general topics as in the standard third-person interpretation of the kitchen, and she too was engaged in food preparation. Visitors were generally reluctant to interact with either the guide or the first-person personas, but two in this group asked the cook if she had any help (which gave her another opportunity to express her frustration with the quality of scullery girls) and how many she had to cook for (twelve on a regular basis and occasionally fifteen to twenty). She also noted that nine hundred pieces of china were once used for a meal. Miss Hoffman's presentation illustrated the impact of technology, the beginning of outsourcing food preparation, the "servant problem" regarding her inability to find a quality scullery maid, and the intensity of a job that required her to prepare two different meals (one for servants, one for her employers and their guests), the latter with very elaborate presentations.

The group encountered the final scene in the family side of the house. A maid, portrayed by a girl probably in her mid-teens, stopped the group to ask for help reading a

list of chores that Mrs. Dousman had given her. When she interviewed for the job she did not claim to be able to read (she could sign her name and recognize letters of the alphabet), but she also did not admit to being illiterate. Now that she has this list, she is in a state of panic; she needs this job, so she doesn't want Mrs. Dousman to think she is a liar. She asked the group if someone would help her read the list. None of the visitors offered assistance, instead maintaining a somewhat awkward silence. The maid acting as our guide helped her before resuming the tour of the main floor.

This particular encounter seemed to cause the most unease among group members, especially compared to their responses to the cook and Quilligan. While in those situations they were not overly demonstrative, they seemed more relaxed than with the young parlormaid. Her situation illustrated aspects of domestic service that have greater impact when interpreted using first-person methods. The parlormaid's youth was consistent with the age of many who would have been in her position, and seeing a girl of her age in this somewhat desperate position was compelling. The effect of her illiteracy was more difficult to interpret, but if she were an immigrant, she very likely would not have been fluent in English, putting her in a similar situation. Interpreting foreign-born characters can be especially challenging. One has to train guides well to speak in accented English, since badly imitated accents spoil the illusion of "meeting" people of the past even more than non-accented speech.

The visitors' unwillingness to interact with most of the character interpreters raises an important drawback to using first-person methods that was perhaps less evident at the Minnesota house museums. My own experience at a living history site and the observations of other museum professionals suggest that interacting with first-person

interpreters is demanding or confusing for visitors.³⁵ During a recent visit to Conner Prairie, an Indiana museum specializing in the state's pioneer history, my husband and I had our first real encounter with "immersion" into historical periods. While I found the experience intriguing, it was also exhausting on many levels, particularly when the character interpreters asked questions of us—although relatively simple and on the order of "What brings you to Prairietown?—I felt as though we needed historically accurate personas in order to have quality conversations with the "villagers." We also realized how difficult it is to ask the interpreters meaningful questions in a situation in which we were "outsiders" just letting ourselves into these people's homes and businesses. In the "real" world, it is considered impolite to ask strangers about politics, religion, and other personal matters. Strangely, it seemed equally impolite in this fictional setting, whereas we asked such questions freely in third-person interactions.

The most difficult interaction we had was with an African American woman who was watching over her employer's home while he was away. When we came in, she was seated by the back door doing some mending. She asked us if we were there to see her employer and whether he was expecting us. We said no, we were just passing through town and learning about life there. We tried to get her to talk about herself, but were unsuccessful for the most part. As much as I wanted to ask her about whether she had been a slave and what she thought of her employer, her standoffishness and our being unprepared to ask such questions in this environment led to some awkward silence. I left wondering if we would have been any more successful had our encounter taken place in the actual historical period. As intriguing as the first-person interactions were, I often found myself wishing I could ask questions of someone from the "present."

With adequate “framing” of the first-person interaction by third-person interpreters, the former method seems more effective. During the Villa Louis tour, we always had our tour guide available should we feel uncomfortable asking certain questions of the “personas.” “Fourth wall” presentations, in which visitors watch interaction of two or more character interpreters without interacting, with an audience discussion after the performance may be the best approach to using “living history.”³⁶ The now-closed Baltimore City Life Museum’s program “Steps in Time,” offered audiences the opportunity to contemplate the issues of race, class, and religion without having to be directly involved with the performance. Like “Hill House Holidays,” the program combined a guided tour with scripted theatrical performance:

After a short introduction in a museum meeting room, small groups moved from room to room in the eight-room house, an apparently invisible audience walking in on small dramas that were already in progress as they arrived and continued after they left. John Hutchinson argued with his servant [a free African American] and boarder about colonialism and abolition. The brother and fiancé of the African American servant disagreed heatedly about the prospects for a free black man who had lost his job in the shipyards due to competition from Irish immigrants. The Catholic Hutchinsons and their Protestant boarder disputed over an 1839 riot at a Carmelite convent.³⁷

An audience discussion followed the tour, which allowed them to ask questions and talk about what they had seen. The Villa Louis servant’s tour took a similar approach as “Steps in Time,” but the fact that tours had to run on a regular schedule meant that the guide needed to worry as much about finishing the tour within a particular frame of time as she did about engaging the visitors in discussion; the former concern typically won out, and usually does at most house museums when time is an issue.

Villa Louis has many resources to interpret the domestic servants who were responsible for the estate’s daily upkeep. It has the benefit of having at least two or three

specific servants whom guides can call by name and use as examples of the hierarchy that existed in the backstairs world. Based on the information in the preserve house exhibit, the site is able to demonstrate the diversity of the staff at the estate and provide faces for some of the names. The presence of this exhibit means that visitors always have the opportunity to learn at least a little more about domestic servants, although they may also choose to ignore it. Without a wealth of specific stories, staff must rely on some non-site specific information, but overall the general material is employed successfully.

Brucemore: Reinterpreting its Past

Over its twenty-two year history as a public historic site, Brucemore, a property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has evolved from an adaptive use property to a traditional house museum in the process of experimenting with new ways of interpreting the house and its residents. As a case study, it serves as an example of the impact of research and reinterpretation on the standard guided tour. Brucemore's advantages include a relatively rich presence of servants in its archives, many accessible servants' rooms, and retention of original country estate features, which provide excellent context for interpreting daily life in its entirety.

Like many house museums, Brucemore was the home of families whose names will not be recognizable to out-of-town visitors, or even to some locals. The mansion was built in 1884 and 1886 for Caroline Sinclair, the widow of Thomas Sinclair, whose meatpacking plant was one of the city's first major industries. The plant also attracted a large number of Bohemian immigrants (now known as Czechs) who settled in Cedar Rapids and worked for Sinclair. Twenty years later, Mrs. Sinclair traded homes with the George Bruce Douglas family. George got his start in his father's oatmeal plant (later to

become The Quaker Oats Company) and would go on to start a successful starch processing plant with his brother Walter. The Douglasses gave their home the name "Bruce more" (a reference to George's middle name and an allusion to his Scottish heritage), expanded the property from ten to thirty-three acres, and created a country estate, complete with a small farm and recreational facilities.

Eldest daughter Margaret inherited the estate upon her mother's death in 1937; she and her husband Howard Hall had been living in Bruce more's guest house since their marriage in 1924. The Halls were particularly well-known and respected members of the Cedar Rapids community. Howard's road building equipment company, Iowa Manufacturing Company, flourished during World War II, and the couple was extremely active in local philanthropy, which continues through the work of the Hall-Perrine Foundation. Their changes to the Bruce more mansion were mostly cosmetic, such as updating the furniture and décor to modern tastes. The most significant change they made to the estate was the decoration of two themed basement recreation rooms, the Tahitian Room and Grizzly Bar. They are also well-remembered for their pets. The Halls always kept a pair of German shepherds and for about fifteen years shared their home with pet lions, each named Leo.

Margaret bequeathed her home to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Trust accepted her gift in 1975.³⁸ Mrs. Hall retained life tenancy at the estate until her death in 1981. At that time, the Trust took possession of the twenty-six acre estate (seven acres had been sold by the Halls), complete with the mansion and six outbuildings. When the Trust initially accepted Bruce more, it expected that it would become a model adaptive use property. Instead of functioning as a traditional house

museum, Brucemore was to become a home for offices of non-profit organizations, a rental facility for non-profits and corporate members, and the host of cultural activities for the community. These needs precipitated the first changes to the mansion's interiors, which were not period room restorations, but the adaptive use of the master bedroom suite, which became a series of meeting rooms. Although the Trust's plans for Brucemore seem to have focused less on interpreting the site's history, the public's intense interest in seeing the home led to training tour guides and establishing by-appointment tour hours. The rooms at that time reflected the 1950s and '60s décor of the Hall era.

The first period restorations were undertaken in 1988, when the mansion's great hall was restored. Wear and tear on the hall's beige shag carpet, installed in 1962, prompted discussion of a period restoration. Instead of replacing the carpet to remain consistent with the Halls' 1950s and 1960s style, Brucemore chose instead to restore the space to the Douglas era, for which photographic evidence existed. A year later, the National Trust changed Brucemore's designation to "museum property," as a recognition of the site's historic significance. The public continued to show tremendous interest in Brucemore and tour hours became more regular and frequent.

A Historic Structure Report (1991) provided the springboard for the very productive decade of the 1990s.³⁹ After examining the physical condition and extant period features of the mansion, the report's authors recommended restoration of the Douglas era interiors and the Board of Trustees subsequently established 1915-1925 as the site's interpretive period. The Douglasses had instigated the most major changes to the mansion and many of these modifications were still in place. During the 1990s, the

restoration of the foundation, slate roof, and replacement of five massive limestone chimney caps constituted the major exterior projects. Inside, the dining room, study, and library were returned to their Douglas era appearances. Visitors now experience almost the entire main floor as a series of period rooms, which facilitates a more coherent narrative.

The interior restorations were not completed without some opposition. Restoration of the library, in particular, provoked strong emotions. During the Hall era, this room had been the site of Howard Hall's "Sunday School" meetings. These secular meetings served as a "think tank" for local businessmen. The library also featured the sofa that former presidents Hoover and Truman sat upon during their visit to Brucemore the night before the dedication of the Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch. Friends of the Halls were particularly upset by the removal of the Hall era elements of the library and a few volunteers severed their connections with Brucemore following the restoration. The fact that many of the guides and local visitors remember or had relationships (albeit often tenuous) with the Halls has made restoration and reinterpretation challenging. As of this writing, a handful of guides continue to emphasize the lives of the Halls at Brucemore, even though most of the interiors depict an earlier period. This is an issue that determined guide training has been unable to influence.

Once the major restoration projects were completed, the site had time and finances to revisit site interpretation. The primary changes involved the development of interpretive themes to guide the standard mansion tour and to encourage a greater emphasis on Brucemore as a country estate. I was hired as an intern in the summer of

1998 to research the themes and determine contexts for the estate and its contents. When I joined the staff in the fall, my research evolved into developing a new training manual for the volunteer guides. The new guide material introduced the themes of art, technology, and the country estate as well as the concept of interpretation through objects. The intention was to discourage guides from presenting to their visitors a laundry list of objects and unrelated anecdotes and to encourage them to construct a meaningful narrative that placed the Douglas family in historical context; to a certain extent, this has been successful. While the new material has eliminated some misinformation and has been embraced particularly by newer tour guides, a small number of veteran guides have found change more challenging.

Brucemore opened its Visitor Center in late 1999 in the Douglasses' barn, built in 1911. Rehabilitated to include permanent and temporary exhibition spaces, it also houses an expanded museum store and additional public facilities. The permanent exhibition, created jointly by Brucemore staff and Deaton Museum Services (now Split Rock Studios) of Minneapolis, gave the staff the opportunity to present an "official" interpretation of the estate, focusing on its major themes. The temporary exhibition space offers opportunities to explore individual topics in depth (such as domestic service, childhood, vacations, and the Douglas starch works disaster) and to experiment with exhibition techniques. These two spaces give Brucemore an advantage that most house museums do not have. Space is almost always limited at historic houses, so central interpretive spaces are unusual.

Staff offices were relocated from the mansion's servants' wing to the barn's former hayloft. In March 2000, the sewing room and servants' bedroom were added to

the standard mansion tour, and the former laundry room and servants' dining room, which previously were open to the public but as the gift shop and an office space, respectively, were re-interpreted as servants' spaces. With these changes, Bruce more has been able to provide more thorough interpretation of servant life on the daily tour.

Interpreting Servants at Bruce more

Although previously less emphasized than today, servants have been part of Bruce more's interpretation throughout its twenty-year history. Even before the additional rooms opened in 2000, guides took visitors through the butler's pantry, the kitchen, the servants' hall, and down the servants' staircase. Guides noted the plainness of the servants' wing as well as the fact that the mansion's architecture was designed to separate servants and family. However, they had little background information to discuss servants in their historical contexts, and the only servant tour guides were consistently familiar with was the children's nurse, Ella McDannel, who appears in many of the family's photos and diaries.

The anticipated expansion of the servants' wing interpretation created the need for further research on the household staff. When I joined the staff as the historian, I was one of few employees charged to delve into such matters. Between March 2000 and the present, Bruce more has incorporated much of the information gathered during my research. I developed additional training materials that included historical information and techniques for the guides and led training sessions focusing on domestic service in general and at Bruce more. A temporary exhibition, "Help Wanted: Working at Bruce more, 1907-1937," highlighted the lives and work of the site's servants and grounds staff. After the exhibition closed, several of its interpretive panels were installed in some

of the mansion's servants' rooms [Figures B-89, B-90, and B-91]. Over several years, I worked with the program director to develop an outreach lesson for the National Park Service's "Teaching with Historic Places" website, which includes maps, photos, excerpts from Ella McDannel's diary and other primary sources. The lesson, "Backstairs at Brucemore: Life as Servants in the Early 20th Century" debuted on the site in March 2003 as part of the agency's spotlight on Women's History Month, <<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/105Brucemore/105brucemore.htm>>.

This lesson plan offers students all over the world access to the story of Brucemore and its servants.

The changes made to interpret Brucemore's servants take advantage of the site's strengths. Brucemore is fortunate to have personnel to conduct primary research, which included combing public documents such as the census and city directories, and teasing information out of ledgers, letters, diaries and photographs in Brucemore's archives. According to my survey respondents, sites not interpreting domestic service are frequently hampered by financial and personnel limitations. Even sites that do include information about servants on their guided tours expressed the desire to do more research to improve their current interpretation.

Archival resources have made the biggest contribution to our understanding of servants at the site. Brucemore's collection includes the diary and two (possibly three) scrapbooks kept by nanny Ella McDannel (known to the family as "Danny the Nanny").⁴⁰ The diary covers five years, 1910-14, and although McDannel's entries are brief, they mention names that have been identified as belonging to servants, and provide a picture of daily life, both work and leisure, for McDannel and other servants. Since personal

reflections of servants are rare, a situation underscored by my survey respondents, Brucemore has the uncommon benefit of a first-hand view from the perspective of a non-family member. When this information is combined with Danny's twenty-year residence at Brucemore and her appearance in many photos, her life may be discussed in as much detail as that of the Douglas family. Danny's extraordinary connection to the Douglases also provides the opportunity to consider the complexity of servant-employer relationships. Danny and Mrs. Douglas were the same age and spent quite a bit of time together without the presence of the children. Their close relationship was naturally an extension of Danny's role as the children's nurse. Even after she left the Douglas family and moved to California (which she had visited for many winters as an employee of the Douglases), she continued to write to Mrs. Douglas and visit her when she came to spend the winter. Although both women appear to have cherished this relationship, it is clear that their friendship was not one of equals. For example, during one of her winters in Santa Barbara, Mrs. Douglas wrote the following to her daughter Margaret: "It has been fun having Danny here the whole week. Socially I hardly know what to do when we are invited out to dinner. Miss Brazelton is near us with Mrs. [illegible] her old employer. Danny goes out with her when I go to a bridge party."⁴¹ Such remarks provide insights into the complexity of a mistress-employee relationship that is not elicited when servants are simply referred to as "like family."

Brucemore also has the advantage of having nearly all of its servant spaces open to the public. The only servant-related space that remains closed is one bedroom on the third floor. Service rooms are toured on each floor and include both work and living spaces, providing many opportunities to discuss servants in various capacities. Their role

as workers may be addressed in the butler's pantry, kitchen, sewing room, and laundry room. Their leisure and amenities may be discussed in the servants' dining room and bedroom, and these also present an example of how the lifestyles of the Douglas servants differed from the majority of servants who worked for middle-class families in Cedar Rapids. A maid-of-all-work was not generally provided with her own dining room, and her bedroom was often a tiny room in the attic, not a relatively large room on the third floor. Such distinctions are important to point out so visitors do not presume that *all* domestic servants had the amenities offered by upper-class families.

During the process of training BruceMore's guides to interpret the domestic servants' perspective, the most frequent concern I encountered was that there was not enough time on the forty-five to fifty minute tour to incorporate the material. Although three rooms were added to the tour, only one was subtracted, so these changes were not without their challenges.⁴² I made several suggestions to tighten the tour to free up time for the extra rooms and I share the concerns over its length, but I also feel that if words are chosen carefully, there is plenty of time to include the new material. In many cases, the key is not to add information but to rethink how the room can be interpreted from multiple perspectives.

In addition to the many spaces inside the mansion where domestic service is discussed, the Visitor Center offers a variety of interpretations of the Douglasses' servants. A panel in the permanent exhibition, "Working at the 'Big House,'" illustrates their importance during all three eras of the home's history. Another feature in this exhibition is a short video presentation that illustrates different conceptions of "work" and "play" based on diary entries written by Mrs. Douglas, Ella McDannel, and a teenage Margaret

Douglas. The temporary exhibition, "Help Wanted," provided an opportunity for visitors to get to know some of the most important but often unseen residents of Brucemore. The fact that the estate has a fair amount of photographs of servants and one of the nanny's diaries gave the exhibition a more intimate feel. A display of early twentieth century appliances illustrated the work required to clean a home one hundred years ago [Figure B-92]. A comparison of a rug beater and an early electric vacuum cleaner served as an illustration of how technology raised expectations of cleanliness that ultimately led to more work. A brightly polished silver tray and tea service sat among the appliances to remind visitors that even items typically associated with owner families required the care of servants.

After this new servant interpretation had been in place at Brucemore for just over a year, I conducted a survey of the tour guides who had attended the training sessions on servants. Around half returned the questionnaires. Their responses gave me a good sense of how they use the materials and their perception of the public's reception of them. For the most part I was very pleased with the guides' acceptance of the material, but I also found that like guides at other sites, Brucemore's were also susceptible to the appeal of the ideal.

For the most part, the guides found the material engaging, informative, and of interest to them and visitors. Many commented that they felt the visitors could relate to the servants better than they could the owners and thus they had enjoyed the servant material. Guides also noted that there had always been questions about the servants and they now felt more able to answer them. Several remarked that the new information about servants made the interpretation more balanced.

One concern that I did have after reading the survey results was the tour guides' inclination to focus on the "good" side of domestic service. This is consistent with a tendency at other sites, according to Walker's survey, and was mentioned specifically by my respondents. In the Bruce more survey, some responses included: "I feel that most tours have a favorable impression of Douglasses and Halls after they hear of working conditions;" "I try to point out that the Douglasses and Halls valued the work their servants did and respected them for their contributions and paid them somewhat better than they may have been paid by other employers;" "also mention how servants were treated almost like family." The fact that guides lean towards these idealistic depictions is consistent with interpretation at other house museums. From the research gathered so far, the Douglasses do seem to have been good employers. Thus far, I have yet to turn up much in the way of servant problems for the Douglasses. They had several servants who stayed with the family many years. The two people I have met who remember Mrs. Douglas have wonderful memories of her as a gracious lady. The servants' side of Bruce more, although plain, is large and airy. There were surely employer-servant conflicts during the site's period of emphasis, but there is no documentation of specific situations. However, that does not mean that guides should not discuss the fact that despite the perception of closeness between servers and served, these were by definition unequal relationships. As one of the Hall's former servants explained, "They were like friends, but you knew your place."

Bruce more has only begun to take advantage of its resources on the Douglasses' domestic servants. With the bulk of the research complete, the focus should now turn toward creating innovative programs that illustrate the activities of servants throughout

the entire house and their relationships with employers. Programs and techniques used at other sites have served as models for some experimental activities. During the 2002 holiday season, I adapted the working-kitchen program exemplified by the Ramsey House and Villa Louis, with success. I also piloted the concept of doing "servants' tours" during spring 2003 by starting the tour at the Visitor Center, leading the group to the house, entering via the basement laundry room and using the servants' perspective as the basis for my tour. My own experiences with interpreting domestic service for the public have emphasized the need to take risks and try new things. Although it may be a statement of the obvious, many sites get locked into doing the same programs continually, in some cases because they lack the staff or finances to experiment. Maymont, a Gilded Age estate in Richmond, Virginia, has thus far been the most ambitious in its development of a fully-nuanced interpretation of domestic service.

Maymont: Breaking New Ground

Although a significant number of Southern historic houses have started to interpret slavery on the antebellum plantation, Maymont is an excellent example of a site where visitors learn about the lives of African American servants during the repressive Jim Crow era after the Civil War. At the time of this writing, servants' areas had not been added to Maymont's standard tour, but the staff was in the process of implementing an impressive plan to restore and interpret the basement servant areas through a detailed permanent exhibition. When the restoration and exhibition are finished in 2005, Maymont will feature one of the most complete interpretations of domestic service in the country. This project has been in the making for over twenty years, but the site's curatorial staff has recently managed to overcome the common hurdles in bringing this

history to the public, including meager site-specific information, limited personnel and funding.

Maymont House sits on a one hundred acre site on the banks of the James River in Richmond, Virginia. James Henry Dooley, lawyer, investor, and later Second Vice President of the Richmond and Danville Railroad, purchased the property in 1886. Several years later, ground was broken for the massive stone house, which combined Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne styles [Figure B-93]. James and his wife Sallie May Dooley, both in their forties, moved into the new residence in 1893 and called it home for the remainder of their lives.⁴³ The couple had no children, and after Mrs. Dooley's death in 1925, the estate passed to the city of Richmond and opened to the public as a museum.

The city operated Maymont from 1926 to 1975 as a free museum and park. The mansion interiors and gardens remained much as they had been during the residential period. However, the city developed part of the large acreage into a small zoo and emphasized the estate's function as a public park. The city transferred management and operation to the non-profit Maymont Foundation in 1975, with a stipulation that the site must remain a free attraction as it had during the city's management. Since that time, Maymont has developed in two directions simultaneously. A children's farm, animal exhibits, and a brand new Nature/Visitor Center are located on the north section of the grounds, and Maymont House and its gardens occupy the south section. Each area has separate staff. Today, visitors can come to Maymont without even realizing there is a historic mansion on the grounds; many Richmonders know the site only as a park and nature center.⁴⁴

Maymont's unusual features do offer the advantage of drawing a wider audience than the typical museum. It is located adjacent to a lower-middle class, predominately African-American neighborhood in a city that has a non-white population of 57 percent. Of the students that participated in school programs at Maymont House, 80 percent were from the Richmond Public School System, which is currently 91 percent African American. Nearly half of Maymont's visitors come from the Greater Richmond Area, which has non-white representation of 30 percent. A 1995 phone survey found that a considerable number of African American visitors came from the Greater Richmond Area.⁴⁵ This audience is far different from that represented in a 1996 survey on visitation to historic sites in the Hudson Valley, New York, in which visitor demographics recorded 50 percent of visitors over fifty years old, with only 4 percent younger than twenty-five, 62 percent earning above \$50,000 a year and holding college degrees, and presumably predominately white.⁴⁶

When Maymont first opened to the public, the main focus in the house was on the Dooleys and their lifestyle. When Dale Wheary joined the staff as curator in 1979, she began investigating the history of Maymont's domestic staff and conducting oral history interviews. Unfortunately, documents such as diaries, letters, and ledgers that are usually key sources for research on any aspect of a family's residence at a historic place are virtually non-existent. A 1926 entry in an early museum log indicates that "All papers and plans at the Maymont home (now 'Dooley Museum') were burned by the Dooleys' former maid, Fannie Waddy, at the order of Mrs. Dooley's nieces."⁴⁷ In 1982, a small NEH grant, however, provided funds for a school outreach lesson on Victorian servant life. The site also began offering a monthly focus tour -- The Victorian Servant Life

Backstairs Tour – which was extremely popular. These tours led to additional connections for the project, including oral history referrals and donations of period household manuals and artifacts. From the beginning, the public showed a great deal of interest in and support for the interpretation of servant life at Maymont.⁴⁸

Members of Richmond's community have played important roles in the planning stages. The site sponsored five Community Roundtables between 1995 and 2000, which brought together diverse groups of civic and church leaders, historians, representatives from other museums, universities, and archives, Maymont neighbors, and former domestic servants to discuss their concerns and ideas related to the proposed domestic service project. In its January 2002 NEH Implementation Grant Proposal, the Maymont Foundation reported that "At the first roundtable in 1995, twenty participants were introduced to newly gathered research and documentation and then asked to discuss how an exhibition containing potentially controversial content would be received in the community. The supportive and positive reaction of the group encouraged staff to move forward."⁴⁹ African American scholars and community leaders were valuable members of these groups. Nearly all of the Dooley's servants were African Americans during a period when Jim Crow laws limited the freedoms they had won through emancipation.

Maymont's goal of restoring the basement service areas has inched closer to realization during the 1990s as staff consulted the community, conducted oral history research, and worked with architects to mine the basement for information relevant to its previous use. In 2002, the site received an NEH implementation grant to support installation of a permanent exhibition, "In Service and Beyond: Domestic Work and Life in a Gilded Age Mansion," to be completed in 2005. This grant will also support

development of a gallery guide, curriculum materials for schools, and a panel exhibition on domestic service that will travel to other historic houses and museums.⁵⁰

Upon completion of the restoration and installation of the permanent exhibition, plans are for visitors to enter the house through the basement servants' entrance. This subterranean entrance [Figure B-94] will have to be modified to make it safer and handicap accessible. After entering the belowstairs area, visitors will begin their Maymont experience by exploring the permanent exhibition at their own pace. They will have access to eight period rooms: the Entry Hall, Kitchen, Pantry, Laundry, Cold Room, Butler's Bedroom, Wine Cellar, and the Servants' Room (a bedroom for female servants). Each restored room will be an exhibition in its own right featuring furnishings, appliances, product packaging, household items, and other artifacts and ephemera that would have been found in such areas between 1893 and 1925. Visitors will also encounter a series of "reading rail" panels mounted on three-foot high barriers (similar to those in the cook's bedroom at Monticello), which will both protect the collection and allow visitors to view the period rooms and interpretive material in a complementary manner. Throughout the exhibition, visitors will have opportunities to supplement the information from the reading rails and exhibit panels with various interactive and auditory experiences.

Two rooms, the Entry Hall and former Furnace Room, will house introductory material and an overview of domestic service between the 1890s and 1920s. Traditional wall-mounted exhibition panels will explore the larger social, economic, and political issues experienced by the domestic staff.⁵¹ In the Entry Hall, visitors will be introduced to estate staff, the coachman and chauffeur, household technology through the use of coal

and the dumbwaiter, and the control enforced by the annunciator (call-box), which will periodically ring to show where servants are needed.

The former Furnace Room will be transformed into a central Exhibition Room. A series of wall panels will provide visitors with the historical context necessary to fully appreciate the nuances of domestic servant life in the Jim Crow era South. Discussions of the term "servant," the changing demographics of domestic service in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, servants in popular literature and visual culture, domestic service practices in Richmond and during the Jim Crow era, and domestic labor in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, among other issues, will deliver the background of domestic service in all its richness. This room will also house an orientation video viewed on a flat screen mounted inside a replica of a furnace similar to what would have been located in the room originally. The video will feature clips from the oral histories that have served as the backbone of this project. Tucked in a private corner of this central space will be a desk and a book of tributes to those who worked in domestic service. Visitors will be encouraged to contribute their own reflections on domestic service based on their personal histories.

In the remaining rooms designated for particular tasks or for storage of specific household items, panels will focus on the objects and activities associated with the space. One of the most visually engaging of the restored rooms promises to be the kitchen [Figure B-95] with its impressive stove and colorful variety of vintage food packaging. The majority of the approximately 933 furnishings and artifacts displayed in the period rooms are not original to Maymont, but were in use during the interpretive period. A local family trust provided financial support for acquisition of the objects, which were

found in antique stores or purchased through eBay (an online auction site).⁵² However, some gifts for the exhibition have specific connections to the Maymont servants. A print, “Jesus Died for Both,” which shows Christ blessing a black and a white child, was given by descendants of William Dilworth, the Dooley’s head butler between 1919-1925 and will be displayed in the Butler’s Bedroom.⁵³ Visitors will spot an African-American doll “sleeping” in a box cradle in the corner of the kitchen. “Gloria” was donated to Maymont by a descendant of head cook Frances Walker, and according to the site’s exhibition walkthrough, “Its presence bears witness to various family and friends of the staff who entered the mansion basement for momentary visits—as well as to important relationships outside its walls.”⁵⁴ The doll also prompts a story told by Walker’s niece, Virgie Payne, who had the following recollection of meeting Mrs. Dooley: “Mrs. Dooley told me, ‘I want you to grow up a fine cook, like your Aunt.’ And my aunt said, ‘Well, I don’t want her to be a cook’.”⁵⁵

“In Service and Beyond” has the potential to make Maymont a model site for domestic service interpretation. The exhibit itself addresses the subject matter with the richness and detail it deserves without placing the burden of additional information and time constraints on guides who interpret the “upstairs” realm. Visitors will be able to view as much or as little of the exhibition as they choose, but they *must* enter these areas in order to go on the mansion tour (guides will take groups upstairs on the half hour), and they have less opportunity to completely avoid the exhibit (as they might at Villa Louis, or at Brucemore). This is an intentional aspect of its design – regardless how much or how little the guides discuss domestic service in the family spaces, the logistics of the exhibit guarantees that visitors will have some level of exposure to the subject. While the

exhibit itself is an example of “segregated knowledge,” as part of the overall tour experience it promotes a more balanced representation of life at Maymont.

As of this writing, the standard house tour at Maymont does not consistently address domestic service in the detail anticipated in the forthcoming restoration and exhibition. I took an unannounced “upstairs” tour two days after I had met with site staff. Our guide, an older white gentleman, made very few references to the servants, and gave little information about who worked at Maymont or how servants might have experienced the family spaces. Site personnel have noted that some guides are reluctant to talk about the African American servants, or Mrs. Dooley’s book, *Dem Good Ole Times*.⁵⁶ Our tour guide occasionally referred to the curatorial staff as “them,” and some of his comments suggested a reluctance to change to comply with the research “they” completed. This tour underlined for me the importance of the plan to introduce visitors to domestic servants before their upstairs tour and the importance of curatorial control over how the visitors learn about domestic servants. In the meantime, visitors who would like to learn more about domestic service at Maymont may tour the unrestored basement each Saturday afternoon between March and September and hear some of the information that will make up the new permanent exhibition [Figure B-96 and B-97]. The Maymont staff hopes these tours will build anticipation for the restoration and more detailed interpretation of the downstairs realm. The project’s guest curator, Elizabeth O’Leary, has published a scholarly treatment of the exhibition’s content, *From Morning to Night: Domestic Service in Maymont House and the Gilded Age South* (2003), which offers a look into the future of Maymont’s interpretation of servants.⁵⁷ Once the service areas

have been restored, the book should provide an excellent resource for visitors who want to learn more.

All of these case study sites (with the exception of Mayslake) have developed their interpretation of domestic servants for tours and special programs over a period of many years. Bruce more is a relative newcomer, having completed the primary research only four years ago. For others, describing the daily life of servants has been a regular part of the visitor experience for twenty years or more. Small staffs and limited funding tend to slow down the progress of the research and the availability of personnel needed to implement interpretation of domestic service. However, I believe that even small sites have underutilized resources. The careful examination of the architecture, a willingness to adopt new strategies, and the theme of the "servant problem" can begin to bring new evidence to light.

Notes

¹ Patricia Chambers Walker and Thomas Graham, ed, *Directory of Historic House Museums in the United States* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000).

² Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 19.

³ These sites include: Glensheen, Duluth, MN; the Pabst Mansion, Milwaukee, WI; the Glessner House, Chicago, IL; the Clarke House, Chicago, IL, the Dana-Thomas House, Springfield, IL; Ellwood House, DeKalb, IL; Spiegel Grove (Rutherford B. Hayes house), Fremont, OH; Salisbury House, Des Moines, IA; Montauk, Clermont, IA; Mathais Ham House, Dubuque, IA; Arbor Lodge, Nebraska City, NE, and the Maggie Lena Walker National Historic Site, Richmond, VA.

⁴ Elisabeth Doermann and Ellen M. Rosenthal, "Introducing the Hill House," *Minnesota History* 46, no. 8 (Winter 1979): 329.

⁵ Doermann and Rosenthal, 330; Barbara Ann Carson, "The James J. Hill House: Symbol of Status and Security," *Minnesota History* 55, no. 6 (Summer 1997): 236.

⁶ Doermann and Rosenthal, 328.

⁷ "Shedding Light on the Other Side," *History News* 36 (September 1981), 9.

⁸ "Shedding Light," 12.

⁹ Candace Floyd, "Upstairs Downstairs: Minnesota Society Tells Story of James J. Hill House" *History News* 36 (September 1981), 12.

¹⁰ Craig Johnson, Site Manager, James J. Hill House, personal email, (31 October 2003).

¹¹ These were some of the things pointed out by the guide during my tour of the site on 31 May 2000.

¹² The information in this paragraph was summarized from a document provided by consultant Emily Harris, "Significance of Mayslake," March 2002.

¹³ Emily J. Harris and Jean L. Guarino, "Interpreting Life at Mayslake – The Peabody Era: Research recommendations and background information," March 2002. Pages 3 through 7 of this nine-page document discuss approaches to interpreting servants that could be adopted by Mayslake. Specific recommendations on how the site should proceed with specific research on servants is included on pages 8 and 9.

- ¹⁴ Craig Johnson, "Hill House Holidays" script, 6.
- ¹⁵ In the play's list of characters, Mary and James Hill are described as "an off-stage noise."
- ¹⁶ "Hill House Holidays" script, 2.
- ¹⁷ Lisa Craig, "Servants Who Worked for the Alexander Ramsey Family: 1872-1903" (M.A. thesis, Cooperstown Graduate Program in Museum Studies, 1994).
- ¹⁸ Ruth Schwartz Cowan's *More Work For Mother* (1983) is the primary source for such an interpretation.
- ¹⁹ Unfortunately, Nina died in 1894 and did not live to see her children marry in the early years of the twentieth century.
- ²⁰ *Villa Louis* (Prairie du Chien, WI: Friends of Villa Louis, 2002), 28, 31-32.
- ²¹ "Visitor Guide, Villa Louis, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin" (Wisconsin Historical Society, nd), np.
- ²² Governor's Commission on Historic Sites Report, Wisconsin Historical Society, 2002, 13.
- ²³ Information about the guided tour of Villa Louis is based on field notes taken during visits on 3 June 2000, and 8 June 2003.
- ²⁴ Conversation with Sarah Hoffman, lead tour guide, 3 June 2000.
- ²⁵ Transcription of label text in servants' bedroom, 8 June 2003.
- ²⁶ Transcription of label text in servants' bedroom, 8 June 2003.
- ²⁷ Joy K. Lintelman, "'Our Serving Sisters': Swedish-American Domestic Servants and their Ethnic Community," *Social Science History* 15, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 381-395; "America is the woman's promised land': Swedish Immigrant Women and American Domestic Service," *Journal of American Ethnic History* (Spring 1989), 9-23.
- ²⁸ Conversation with Michael Douglass, Site Administrator, Villa Louis, 2 June 2000; conversation with Sarah Hoffman, Lead Interpreter, Villa Louis, 3 June 2000.
- ²⁹ Visitors look into Penelope McLeod and Louis LeBrun's bedrooms from behind a Plexiglas barrier, as opposed to the aforementioned general servants' bedrooms. This distinction reinforces the value of some objects or people over others.

³⁰ My comments on this exhibition are made based on photographs I took of the exhibit during a site visit in June 2000. When I made a second visit in June 2003, the exhibit remained open to visitors in the same format.

³¹ While it may seem like a long-shot that a random visitor might be able to fill in the gaps of a site's domestic history, one of my own experiences reveals that it can indeed happen. I happened to be at Brucemore one Saturday morning training guides about interpreting domestic service, when one of the staff found me and told me that a woman on the current house tour had said that her father had been the Douglas's chauffeur. Such stories are rather common for the later period of Brucemore's residential history; it seems like everyone in Cedar Rapids has either worked for or is related to someone who worked for Mr. and Mrs. Hall. However, stories from the Douglas era are less common. I caught the woman and her husband at the end of the tour and asked her some questions. She had with her photographs of her father, the Douglas's Santa Barbara home, and the Douglas daughters, as well as a book that had been signed and given to her father by Mr. Douglas. As it turned out, her father had worked for the Douglasses briefly. When she told me his last name was "Horn" I immediately remembered reading about a "Horn" in some of the family diaries. She told me that her father had been hired to drive for the Douglasses during their 1913 vacation in England. Mr. Douglas liked his work so much that he asked him to come to America, hiring him away from the Lord Mayor of London. The visitor's story was consistent with our archival information, and we were not only able to add a fascinating anecdote to our stories about servants, but she provided us with some wonderful photographs of her father from the period in which he had been employed by the Douglasses.

³² The Alexander Ramsey House in St. Paul, Minnesota, Stan Hywet Hall in Akron, Ohio and Maymont in Richmond, Virginia are three additional sites that offer or have offered separate tours that focus on the servant's perspective.

³³ At the National Trust for Historic Preservation's workshop, "View from the Kitchen," Carson described this method: "The object of perspectivist history is to consider something—a place, event, person, or group of people—from several points of view." Jane Brown Gillette, "Breaking the Silence," *Historic Preservation*, March/April 1994, 42.

³⁴ Patricia Chambers Walker, "A More Complete History: Interpreting Domestic Servants at Historic House Museums" (M.A. thesis, John F. Kennedy University, 1996), 183.

³⁵ In his review of programs at Colonial Williamsburg based on the site's "Choosing Revolution" storyline, Edward Ayers frequently describes the confusion or discomfort of visitors as they interact with character interpreters. For example, he describes a first-person program at a military encampment, where Governor Dunmore's regiment of freed slaves is being trained: "A character interpreter portraying a newly arrived runaway slave approached the visitors and began asking their advice concerning his dilemma. If he joined the Governor's regiment to gain his freedom, what would happen to his wife

and children left behind to face the wrath of his master? The character interpreter tended to overact at times, but in general gave a convincing performance. The visitors, however, seemed unsure how to react to his confronting them which in character." Edward Ayers, "Colonial Williamsburg's Choosing Revolution Storyline" *The Public Historian* 20, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 58.

³⁶ Stacy F. Roth, *Past Into Present: Effective Techniques for First-Person Historical Interpretation* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 166.

³⁷ National Park Service, "National Register Bulletin: Telling the Stories," 2000, <<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/interp/int6.htm>> (31 July 2003).

³⁸ My description of Brucemore's National Trust era history is based on informal conversations with Brucemore staff members over the past six years, especially those related to a 2001 temporary exhibition I coordinated that interpreted the site's twenty-year anniversary as a public historic site. Peggy Whitworth, who has served as the site's first, and as of this writing, only executive director contributed a great deal to my understanding of Brucemore's recent past.

³⁹ Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc., "Historic Structure Report for Brucemore, Cedar Rapids, Iowa," 1991.

⁴⁰ One scrapbook has been attributed to the Douglas family, but I would argue that is equally likely to have belonged to Ella McDannel. Ella is known to have kept a postcard collection (the album includes many postcards of the places where the family vacationed), the book includes two postcards addressed to Miss McDannel, and several photos of other servants are pasted in the book.

⁴¹ Irene Hazeltine Douglas to Margaret Douglas Hall, January 20, Hall Collection correspondence, days of the week only, folder 4, Brucemore archives.

⁴² Closing the door of the "preschool room" also caused some objections. Although the room is not restored and is basically used to store extra books from the library restoration, two juvenile portraits of George Bruce Douglas and his brother Walter hang in the room. Some guides objected to closing this room because they used the portrait of Walter to tell the story of his death in the *Titanic* disaster. The staff offered other suggestions for incorporating this material, and eventually the issue died out.

⁴³ Dale Wheary, "Maymont: Gilded Age Estate," *Maymont Notes* 1 (Fall 2001): 11. The name "Maymont" (also written May Mont) comes from Mrs. Dooley's maiden name and "mont" for hill."

⁴⁴ Conversation with Elizabeth O'Leary, Guest Curator, Maymont, 17 March 2003.

⁴⁵ Maymont Foundation, Implementation Grant Proposal to the National Endowment of the Humanities, January 2002, 13.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Frank E. Sanchis, III, "Looking Back or Looking Forward? House Museums in the 21st Century," *An Athenaeum of Philadelphia Symposium on Historic House Museums*, December 4-5, 1998, <<http://philaathenaeum.org/hmuseum/sanchis/htm>> (13 September 2001).

⁴⁷ Quoted in Wheary, endnote 8.

⁴⁸ Maymont Foundation, Implementation Grant Proposal, 5.

⁴⁹ Maymont Foundation, Implementation Grant Proposal, 7-8.

⁵⁰ As of January 2002, the Black History Museum, Richmond, VA; Biltmore Estate, Ashville, NC; the Rogers Historical Museum, Arkansas, and Old Town Alabama, Montgomery, AL have expressed interest in hosting the twelve panel exhibit. Maymont Foundation, Implementation Grant Proposal, 10-11.

⁵¹ Maymont Foundation, *In Service and Beyond: Domestic Work and Life in a Gilded Age Mansion* Exhibition Walkthrough, January 2002, 1. All descriptions of the proposed exhibition are summarized from this document.

⁵² Elizabeth O'Leary, Guest Curator, Maymont, personal email, (16 July 2002).

⁵³ Maymont Foundation, Exhibition Walkthrough, 12.

⁵⁴ Maymont Foundation, Exhibition Walkthrough, 7.

⁵⁵ Elizabeth O'Leary, "Making the Invisible Visible: Domestic Employees at Maymont House" *Maymont Notes* 1 (Fall 2001): 17.

⁵⁶ Conversation with Dale Wheary, Director of Historical Collections and Programs, Maymont, 17 March 2003.

⁵⁷ Elizabeth O'Leary, *From Morning to Night: Domestic Service in Maymont House and the Gilded Age South* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2003).

CHAPTER SIX

USING THE “SERVANT PROBLEM” TO INTERPRET DOMESTIC LIFE

With varying levels of detail and success, many historic house museums are now exploring the lives of domestic servants and other site workers. My case studies have illustrated that while some sites have ample resources for interpreting their domestic workers, even sites with little in terms of original material culture and site-specific documents may successfully interpret aspects of domestic service by using broad cultural information. However, both my survey results and case studies reveal that the interpretation of subjects of the most interest to the new social history—race, ethnicity, gender, and class—although sometimes present, would have a greater impact if treated with more complexity.

In the opening chapter, I explored the servant problem and demonstrated its presence in visual culture between 1880 and 1920. For sites just beginning to explore the possibilities of addressing domestic service on tours, or for those who want to enhance a current program, this chapter offers suggestions for building an interpretive tour based on the “servant problem.” Using the servant problem as an interpretive theme supplies information about the lives of servants, promotes a narrative approach to domestic service, and addresses it from multiple perspectives, thereby providing context that makes a site’s history more well-rounded and meaningful for tour visitors. This approach also emphasizes the complex relationship between mistress and servant and does not neglect the presence of conflict and class and ethnic differences.

The Planning Process: House Museums and Communities

Before launching new site interpretation, a considerable amount of planning and research is required. Current opinion in the house museum community suggests that all sites could benefit from taking a step back and assessing where their programs and interpretations are headed and how they might improve. Gerald George, a special projects associate for the Council on Library and Information Resources and former director of the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), has recently identified the existence of “historic house museum malaise,” which ought to serve as a wake-up call.¹ George cites presentational redundancies, declines in maintenance and interpretation, and lack of community involvement with these institutions as endemic. Historic house museums have the power to “employ unique educational tools and processes, preserving human emotions in other eras, and helping visitors understand their relationships to larger communities.”² However, despite their potential educational value, house museums “often fail to connect with [their communities]. Efforts are inadequate to tap into new constituencies or keep up with the needs and interests of old ones.”³ The process of implementing new interpretations, like those highlighting domestic servants, can provide a gust of fresh air and give house museums opportunities to shed their roles as “temples” in favor of that of “forums.” Involving community members in the planning process should benefit both parties: the house museum staff learns which stories and techniques will engage visitors, and community members have an opportunity to take a more active role in sites that are often described as “hands-off.” Although most house museum personnel responding to my survey reported that the inclusion of domestic servants in their interpretation has been well-received by staff and

visitors, changes create potential for resistance or hostility, an experience shared by many working at former plantations.

House museum professionals are just beginning to evaluate the needs and interests of their visitors, and in order for sites to continue to grow and remain relevant to their communities, visitor surveying needs to become a more common practice. In *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, Jessica Foy Donnelly notes,

To be effective places to learn about history, house museums must reflect in their interpretations not only knowledge of historical facts, but also knowledge of their audiences – who visits, what they expect, why they come, how they learn, what they think about their experience, and who doesn't come and why. Historic house museums traditionally have not devoted a lot of energy to this kind of study.⁴

This means more than collecting zip-codes, but taking time to talk one-to-one with visitors, members, volunteers, trustees, and members of the community who have not visited the site. For example, some museums have begun to use focus groups to gather information. Such interaction is especially important in launching new programs or interpretations since having both institutional and community support will make the transitions smoother and the information more pertinent. Site personnel might be encouraged by the public's willingness to learn about controversial issues at museums. Audience research for the new City Museum in Washington, D.C. revealed that constituents expected the institution to address race and slavery among other difficult topics.⁵ Visitor surveys, focus groups, or community forums can help site staff determine hot button issues so they may decide on ways that exhibits and programs can foster productive discussions about difficult issues. Maymont House in Richmond, Virginia sponsored several "Community Roundtables" to allow a diverse group of residents to give the staff feedback on their proposed plan to create more detailed interpretation of the

house's predominately African-American servant staff. At the first of these gatherings, the group discussed the potentially controversial content, and the participants' support and positive reaction encouraged Maymont staff to proceed.⁶ Such conversations not only further the process of making museum material socially relevant, but also foster good will between the museum and its constituents.⁷

House museum professionals and staff at historic sites within the same region can also provide support, advice, and the potential for cooperative programming. Thanks to the internet, they have greater access to their colleagues. Annual and regional conferences and meetings of organizations such as AAM and AASLH still provide wonderful opportunities for contact and professional development, but museum and house museum-specific discussion lists create the potential of a virtual conference every day. The topics discussed on the AASLH's moderated historic house museums listserv range from practical curatorial and housekeeping issues to philosophical discussions about whether or not there are too many house museums.⁸ Such resources are free, easily accessible, and provide a useful sounding-board for new ideas.

Cooperation can make a big difference for institutions that have limited personnel and resources. House museums and historic sites within a particular region have recently worked together to generate new ideas for interpreting race and gender. In "Raising our Sites: Integrating Women's History into Museums," Kim Moon describes a three-year project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities that introduced new findings in women's history into the interpretation of fourteen historic sites across the state of Pennsylvania.⁹ Each site worked with an assigned scholar from a nearby college or university with expertise in a needed area. These scholars conducted research in

libraries and archives and supervised the research of site volunteers. The relationships developed between the scholars and museum professionals also rejuvenated the latter's pursuit of scholarship, which often ebbed when the site's daily operations become their priority. The project also included meetings of all participants and created a valuable network for the site staff, who are often isolated from resources outside of their immediate communities. Moon noted that the program "provided a way for participating sites to share their successes and challenges with others across the state, take a leadership role in a particular aspect of programming—archival usage, audience development, or educational outreach—and exchange resource information and expertise with other sites that were attempting similar work."¹⁰ The result of the "Raising our Sites" project included expanded interpretation of women at several sites, and the next phase had plans to focus on laborers and servants, religious and ethnic groups, African Americans and Native Americans.¹¹

The National Trust for Historic Preservation coordinated a similar project to assist six of its twenty-one historic sites with their interpretations of slavery.¹² Between September 1999 and February 2000, two or more staff members from the six sites met for day-long workshops, which rotated among the sites to familiarize the group with each other's resources and to provide case-studies. Two history professors also facilitated discussions at these sessions. Between meetings, participants read contextual sources, conducted site-specific research, and developed new interpretive themes and programs for their site. Susan Schreiber, then Director of Interpretation at the National Trust, cited three significant results of the program:

The resources of each staff have been strengthened and enlarged by interaction and collaboration with their peers. . . . [T]he involvement of outside scholars

who can help sites see their histories from different perspectives and in the context of larger themes has been critical. . . . [T]he participants have begun to focus on the stories of individuals; even when the information is sketchy, there is a real person there, not just a group, and that makes a difference—and will make a difference to visitors.¹³

These two programs provide excellent examples of ways that museums and historic sites, which typically have limited financial and personnel resources, can work together to improve their interpretation and reach more diverse audiences. They provide the support and community that are needed to take bold new steps. “Raising our Sites” also demonstrated the value of cooperation between historic sites and academics who can bring new scholarly perspectives to bear. Citywide collaboration can also provide energy for programs. For example, house museums and local history institutions can pool their resources to present joint exhibits and programs related to work and domestic service. The History Center (operated by the Linn County Historical Society) loaned period examples of household technology for Brucemore’s temporary exhibition about domestic servants, which filled in a gap that the house museum’s collection could not supply. The old saw “Many hands make light work” couldn’t be truer for the small- to medium-sized institutions that benefit from collaborative efforts between museums, scholars, and community members.

Resources for Understanding the Servant Problem

Interaction with other sites and constituents during the planning process reminds staff that the residences that became historic house museums did not exist in a vacuum. They, their owners, residents, and contents, acted or were acted upon by the social forces of their time and region. The fact that a house museum is an environment in which history took place is perhaps its greatest advantage as an educational tool. Therefore,

interpreters do not do their site justice by ignoring its historical context. This may seem like a statement of the obvious, but some house museum tours continue to be a recitation of inventories.¹⁴ In their book *Great Tours!*, Levy, Lloyd, and Schreiber explain that “Interpreting and reconstructing the historical context that shaped the lives of people who lived long ago rounds out the site narrative and makes it more accurate.”¹⁵ In most cases, the stories of the people who “round out” the story, including domestic servants, have yet to be investigated or so little has been found that interpreters have not been comfortable discussing them.

For most sites, which rely on general information about servants to create a more vivid picture, the servant problem is a topic that is rich enough to provide historical context, yet narrow enough that guides can stay focused on a theme. Chapter one has illustrated that the servant problem is represented in a wide variety of primary sources, both visual and textual; however, respondents to my survey revealed that these materials are not widely known by house museum interpreters. Preparing a binder with copies of primary resources about domestic service and its problems during the site’s era and region is an excellent project for interns or volunteers, especially those with access to a good university library. This collection of materials can be the foundation for interpretation and a tool for training guides. While most of these sources described an ideal that was probably not attained by most households, they illustrate what women employers (especially middle-class) aspired to.¹⁶ Site staff and guides should discuss the implications of these ideal depictions both for their original and current audiences.

Even general information may be interpreted through the lens of a specific region, state, or city, particularly by using public records and government reports and statistics.

Aggregate census data and government labor reports often provide demographic information about domestic servants. One might consider this data in conjunction with industrial factors since factories attracted many young women away from domestic service. The city's industrial development during the site's interpretive period might shed some light on the potential servant labor pool.

Immigration patterns affected the supply of servants in some states and regions. When providing general information about how immigration related to domestic service in the area, sites should be sensitive to specific regional immigration patterns. National publications such as the *Ladies' Home Journal* frequently mentioned Irish domestics, which were practically ubiquitous in the Northeast, but not in the Midwest or South.¹⁷ Even within regions, differing patterns exist. In Iowa, there were pockets of Bohemian, German, Dutch, and Norwegian immigration. Thus, it is important in Cedar Rapids to emphasize that the majority of immigrants, and servants, were of Bohemian origin. Also consider that in rural areas where there was less competition with factories for labor and fewer immigrants or African Americans, native-born women may have made up a larger percentage of the servant population. Tedious, but useful tools for gathering information about the servant population of individual cities are the federal and state censuses. I chose one year in which the Douglasses' household is recorded in the census and scrolled through all sheets for the city of Cedar Rapids and kept tallies of the ethnic background of servants as well as the number of servants living in individual households.¹⁸ While this procedure lacks total precision, it does provide a revealing snapshot of domestic service at a moment in the city's history.

As I demonstrated in chapter one, images in the early twentieth century also reflected attitudes about servants and the servant problem. Servants can be difficult to personify since they were so often transient and practically invisible in the household. If a site has images of servants who worked there, reproductions of them should be displayed in areas where servants are discussed.¹⁹ If the collection lacks such materials, one might consider using popular images of servants such as advertisements. In either case, but especially in the latter, staff should encourage guides and visitors to observe and note how images can be manipulated to depict situations and relationships that were desired rather than those that existed.

When discussing domestic service on tours, visitors benefit from hearing how the staff researched the domestic servants. If space is available, make copies of primary sources available for browsing.²⁰ This provides the opportunity to get a first-hand experience of the work of historians. Discussion of historical research techniques gives visitors a “behind the scenes” perspective of the way history is “done.” Widespread interest in genealogy has already introduced many visitors to the techniques used in researching domestic servants. Sites should not be hesitant to indicate that information has been gathered from general primary or secondary sources. Part of the reason that general information must be used is due to a lack of documentation of servants, which itself indicates their place in society. Rex M. Ellis, vice president for the historic area at Colonial Williamsburg, emphatically advocates the use of general sources if necessary:

When site-specific information about a known minority presence is limited, a museum’s staff should study evidence available elsewhere in the region to determine what situations, people, and topics might parallel their site’s history, or help the public understand interconnections that may exist. . . . history is a puzzle consisting of a set of pieces that are incomplete because all of the facts

are not, and simply cannot be, known. Historical interpretation, therefore, must extrapolate from the known truth.²¹

After the site's staff has collected this arsenal of primary resources, they will be ready to determine how to use the evidence as an interpretive theme.

Creating New Interpretation: Storylines and Themes

In order to transform shrines into socially relevant institutions, house museum professionals have developed strategies to bring context into their tours and to make them more than just a laundry list of objects. Three museum professionals, Barbara Abramoff Levy, Sandra Mackenzie Lloyd, and Susan P. Schreiber, recently published *Great Tours! Thematic Tours and Guide Training for Historic Sites* (2001), to support the development of more engaging interpretation. The authors claim that the most effective tours organize information according to storylines and themes, which visitors will find more palatable to digest and remember than strings of raw data. This technique also encourages guides to be more selective when choosing what to discuss on their tours and to use the site's material resources to their best advantage. The resulting narrative tends to be more interesting and engaging for visitors.

The main organizational tool, the storyline, summarizes the site's most historically significant information and is demonstrated by three to five themes, illustrating more specific issues that may be anchored by the site's material culture. Some themes may be site specific, while others are general. These three to five points are the ideas the site hopes visitors will remember from their visit. For example, the authors of *Great Tours!* developed the following storyline and themes for the fictional Caleb Crawley House:

Storyline: “The Caleb Crawley House tells the story of a family devoted to American Independence before, during, and after, the Revolutionary War.”

Themes: (1) “The Caleb Crawley family were staunch patriots who believed in American freedom.” (2) Eighteenth-century Americans had distinctive patterns of work, education, and socialization.” (3) “Energetic individualism is a bedrock of American independence.”²²

The guides use themes as plots for the house’s narrative, which is told through the site’s physical evidence, namely artifacts and architecture.

Great Tours! provides detailed information about how historic site personnel can develop a storyline, themes, a thematic tour outline, and suggestions for training guides to adopt the new method. Working for a National Trust historic site made me familiar with this approach several years before the publication of *Great Tours!* (co-author Susan Schreiber was the Director of Interpretation when I started at Brucemore) and I have had success rewriting Brucemore’s training material using this framework.²³ Therefore, I used this model as the basis for an interpretive theme built on the servant problem.

The servant problem addresses many social and cultural changes present in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: industrialization, immigration, social class and gender roles. The size of the domestic staff and their working conditions varied from household to household, but the servant problem had the potential to affect most families. Writers at the turn of the century identified the problem as “one of the burning questions of the day. It colors current literature, and even has its own bibliography. In drawing-rooms, in clubs, on the street, in all the places where men and women meet, it is sure to make its voice heard.”²⁴ While the middle classes were most susceptible, the upper classes were not immune, especially after World War I and other forces significantly decreased the number of immigrants entering the United States. Historic houses are typically former residences of the wealthy, but they can be used to discuss the general

servant problem by looking at the amenities and resources they had that middle-class homes did not. The servant problem also opens opportunities for discussing working conditions, the stigma of domestic service, and local immigration patterns. The stigma of domestic service is one of the most difficult issues to address since it directly identifies this work with the lower class, which can make visitors uncomfortable. Finally, the servant problem offers the opportunity to discuss various relationships within the home: those between servants within their own hierarchy, those between servants and their employers, and those between women of different classes and ethnicities (mistress/maid relationship). One might phrase an interpretive theme based on the servant problem as follows: *The “servant problem” affected the way housewives and servants viewed and interacted with each other.* This one sentence provides the plot for a basic story about domestic servants at a typical historic site.

Examining Physical Evidence

To make the servant problem engaging for visitors, guides need to provide visual hooks to hang their story on, such as images, artifacts, and architectural elements. The artifacts found at historic house museums overwhelmingly represent the lifestyle of the owners; however, that fact does not limit their interpretive potential to just the wealthy. As the servants’ tours of Villa Louis demonstrated, “perspectivistic history” can suggest new ways to look at the possessions of the upper class. For any artifact in the collection, one can ask the following questions: How would a servant have related to this object? Did it require special or frequent cleaning or maintenance? Does it represent an attitude that might have affected the relationship between employers and servants?²⁵ For example, the Gorham silver advertisement discussed in chapter one [Figure B-19]

illustrates that although silver was a luxury item associated with the wealthy, part of the enjoyment of silver came through the fact that the owners had people to clean it. Any object or room can be interpreted through the perspective of different people: the owners, children, guests, or servants. Acknowledging this fact and exploring it makes the interpretation of artifacts rich and engaging. It also brings the house alive with various different types and personalities.

Granted, the time limits of guided house tours do not allow for such a richly detailed interpretation of every object in the house. However, it is possible to interpret one or two artifacts in each space through multiple perspectives. Most period rooms include one artifact that can serve as the focus for the room's interpretation. Other objects in the room can be simply identified and tied into the theme. At Brucemore, the brass butler's screen in the dining room provides such an opportunity [Figure B-98]. This screen, a piece original to the interpretive period, allows guides to discuss the room's use as well as relationships between the family and servants. The screen functions primarily as a physical and emotional divider between the domains of the family and servants. The side facing the family is decorated with a series of country and hunting scenes, which might reflect the leisure of country estates like the one the Douglasses created in Cedar Rapids. It is shiny and polished like the rest of the family's possessions. The opposite side, which faces the butler's pantry, reveals the screen's construction and is not decorative. This object provides the first example of the stylistic dichotomy of the mansion: the family side is luxurious and decorative, the servants' side is plain and functional. The guide might ask the group of visitors to consider the different feelings family members and servants might have had about the screen.

In addition, the screen's placement and the spatial relationship between the dining room and butler's pantry affected the seating arrangement. Mrs. Douglas sat nearest to the screen, at what most visitors identify as the "head" of the table. Sitting in this position gave her the ability to communicate with the butler, who served the meal. More importantly, the screen removes from the family's view the work necessary to prepare and serve the meal. One can expand the theme of the "hiding" of work and utensils to other objects in the room, such as the sideboard and china cabinets, where additional silver and tableware were stored. The screen can also be used to discuss the relationship between employers and their servants. This very prominent artifact makes a strong statement about the division of the servants from family members. This point can be further extrapolated to discuss the function of servants' uniforms as decorative distinctions between servants and family.

Often the most valuable and unique objects take center stage in historic houses, but small and seemingly insignificant artifacts can be used to make powerful points. Barbara and Cary Carson have also suggested how interpreting home security and various kinds of locks can illustrate the division of households. Some sites include cupboards and cabinets whose owners felt must be individually secured to prevent theft by servants. The Carsons note that "a thoughtful interpreter can use something as simple as a lock and key to conjure up a vanished social system of masters and servants, the work routine of staff of (usually female) domestics, and even something as intangible as the ambivalent trusting – yet distrustful relationship between workers and supervisors."²⁶

Other objects built into nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century houses speak to the issue of the divided household. Communication devices like annunciators, call bells,

and speaking tubes illustrate the separation of the family and servants and the ability to have servants at their beck and call through the use of technology. Annunciators and call bells were one-way communicators – family members used them to indicate where a servant's assistance was requested, but servants could not use them to communicate with their employers.

Kitchens and laundries that retain their original equipment are rich sources of physical evidence, especially in terms of the technology available to the servant staff. Unfortunately, the equipment is often in short supply. Did the family provide the servants with the latest in "labor-saving" devices or technology such as indoor running water, electricity, wood, coal, or gas ranges? If the technology itself is no longer present, evidence of its existence is often found in ledgers, diaries, and other family documents and in the building itself. Many commentators on the servant problem suggested the purchase of household equipment could keep the staff happy. An author in *Ladies' Home Journal* proclaimed, "I have found every one of my labor savers used and appreciated by the varied workers who have served me. Therefore, I would buy for maids' use quite as many labor savers as for my own use, because with their aid the work is much better done, as well as easier and quicker."²⁷ Others claimed it was useless to do so because servants refused to use the machines: "I had the most obstinate general housework girl that ever lived. She was middle-aged and set in her ways. None of my appliances appealed to her. She grumbled and grumbled because I insisted on the use of the breadmixer, Dover egg-beater, sink brush for washing kettles, and other of the commonest conveniences."²⁸

One can also consider the sanitary issues related to service areas, particularly in kitchens and laundry rooms. While hygiene and sanitation were matters of great concern to Americans at the turn of the century, surprisingly service areas were sometimes overlooked in this regard. In a 1907 article in *House and Garden*, Erie L. Preston asserts that

The very places in the establishment where it is easiest for germs to lodge and thrive, owing to the prevalence of dampness, heat and in many cases lack of sunshine, seem to have been the last ones considered in the great movement towards more perfect hygienic and sanitary standards. . . . Open plumbing and modern day labor saving and hygienic devices should be installed in every kitchen, pantry and laundry of any home that is to house a family which lays claim to keeping abreast of the times or to be 'up' in topics of current thought or scientific discourse.²⁹

Interpretive staff should consider whether the kitchen and other service areas would have been easy to keep clean and sanitary. The materials used for covering the floor and walls may provide some clues. The sanitary conditions of the service areas reveal the family's attitude toward their staff as well as the amount of work necessary for servants to complete to keep their work space clean in addition to their other duties. In some cases, the modern cleanliness of restored house museum kitchens creates an interpretive problem, since these rooms were hardly comfortable for servants engaged in work that involved heat and dirt.³⁰

Relatively intact laundry rooms can offer the opportunity to describe one of the most hated chores in the household and the way that it liberated some working women. Although laundry was a physically demanding and despised chore, for many erstwhile live-in servants, it provided opportunities for freedom. Laundresses did not live with their employers (except those employed in large and very elaborate households); thus they had more control over their hours, work environment, and freedom from being at

their employers' beck and call. The life story of the washerwoman cited in chapter one is one example of the somewhat liberated nature of this position. Elizabeth Clark-Lewis found during her interviews with former domestics that laundresses often provided advice about living out.³¹ Thus, laundry equipment offers the opportunity to address both live-in and live-out domestic service.

No matter how rich their collection of artifacts and documentary sources, most historic sites also use architecture to depict working conditions and relationships between servants and employers. The following are questions to consider in terms of interpreting servant areas that are accessible to visitors:

1. How are the servant areas separated from the family's? Are there inconspicuous doors to servant areas? What kinds of buffer zones are there between the two parts of the house (i.e. hallways, butler's pantries)?
2. What areas of the house does the servant staircase access compared with the family staircase? Are some floors accessible only by a particular stairway? How are the servants' stairs physically different from the family's stairs?
3. What building materials are used in the servants' areas compared to the family's? What are the stylistic differences or similarities?
4. Did the family provide a special common area for the servants' meals and/or recreation?
5. Which cardinal direction do the servants' rooms face?
6. Do servants' bedrooms have access to heat? How do their bedrooms compare to those on the family side from an architectural standpoint?
7. Where did servants enter the house? Where did family enter?
8. Did certain servants within the household have nicer accommodations than others? Are there any architectural cues that suggest hierarchy among the servant staff?
9. Did the servants have access to their own bathroom facilities? Would they have had to share facilities with their employer? If so, what issues might this have raised? If the servants had their own bathrooms, how do they compare to those used by family members or guests?
10. Are servant work spaces, such as the kitchen efficiently laid out to minimize the number of steps taken by the cook?³²

Many of these questions may be addressed as they relate to the servant problem.

Amenities such as servants' dining rooms, pleasant bedrooms, and private bathroom

facilities made wealthier families less susceptible to the servant problem. Advice to middle-class women instructed them to be considerate of the environment they provided for their servants and made a direct link between living conditions and the servant problem. One author explained the benefits of providing pleasant sleeping quarters for servants:

This kind of a room, with a spotless maple floor and clean walls painted with oil paint, may be the one thing that will keep your maid servant loyal and true to you when your less thoughtful neighbors are worried with help troubles. . . . Every house ought to have a separate bathroom for the servant near her sleeping room. . . . A small room off the bedroom, with a plain bathtub, washbowl and toilet will do more toward solving the servant problem than any luxury you can imagine for your maid.³³

Another concurred: "How to get and keep our servants has become a topic of universal interest. Almost every angle of the subject has been touched upon and debated, but it seems to me that the very human side of providing adequately for their personal comfort, so that they may be happy and contented in their daily environment, has been more or less disregarded."³⁴ At least one article also featured photographs of simple but pleasant servant bedrooms [Figure B-99].

The presence of a servants' hall or dining room presents opportunities to interpret the differences between middle- and upper-class households as well as servant life beyond their work. Wealthy families were generally the only group that provided their servants with such an accommodation for their comfort; in middle-class homes, the servant(s) typically ate and entertained visitors in the kitchen. Leisure is not often discussed in the context of servants since they did not have much free time. This is an important point to make, but visitors should be aware that servants had limited time off (usually Thursday afternoons and every other Sunday) when they could relax, visit

friends or family, and attend dances and other amusements. During her undercover work investigating domestic service, Lillian Pettingill joined fellow servants in one home in playing dominoes, checkers, and cards in the evening.³⁵

One difficulty with servant spaces is that, except in rare occasions, these rooms have been the most frequently modified following their residential histories. Their furnishings have typically been lost since they were not seen as important by the families who owned the house, and may have been discarded during the transition from private home to public institution. Rex Ellis notes, "Artifactual evidence is almost always scant for slaves, servants, indentured servants, Native Americans, and other marginal communities. It is shortsighted and irresponsible, however, to allow that lack of evidence to justify silence about those individuals and their roles in the site's history."³⁶ Some sites interpret these rooms without furniture and focus on what the architecture can reveal about the function of the room, the level of concern that the homeowners had for their servants, or what it might have been like to inhabit these spaces. Using the architecture as the primary evidence has advantages; it gives visitors an exposure to the techniques of "reading" houses, but also emphasizes that what is not present is often as telling as what is saved. This approach also takes the focus off of objects and places it on ideas. Therefore, an analysis of a site's servant spaces, equipment, and amenities can be a valuable tool for helping visitors understand the servant problem and may suggest how a particular family may have fared in "keeping" servants.

For example, Brucemore guides interpret one unfurnished servants' bedroom on the standard tour. This room is relatively large and pleasant. However, when one looks closer, it is evident that the Douglasses cut some corners in this room. The floor is simple

yellow pine; the edges have been painted brown, leaving a bare patch in the middle that has never been protected by anything but a rug [Figure B-100]. Inexpensive wallpaper was hung in this room, and a tear in the paper reveals that when the room was redecorated, previous layers of paper were not removed, but papered over. The servants' bedrooms are also the only bedrooms in the house without fireplaces, although they did have steam heat. The expense of installing a fireplace was not considered necessary for a room that family and visitors would not see. The overall interpretation of this room is that although the Douglasses made this room pleasant for the two or more servants who lived there, it was not a place where they invested considerable financial resources.

If a site decides to reconstruct the furnished appearance of a servants' room, there are resources to turn to for recommendations. Articles in contemporary periodicals and household manuals, such as those cited earlier, describe ways to furnish servants' bedrooms. Furnishing plans produced by National Park Service sites (usually available in the government publications department of most university libraries) can offer suggestions as well. The Historic Furnishings Report for Lindenwald includes relatively detailed descriptions of the furnishings and fixtures either extant or reproduced for their service rooms.³⁷ Sagamore Hill's report has very detailed descriptions for each room in the servants' wing, which include lists of artifacts and artistic renderings of the proposed restoration [Figure B-101].³⁸ While each site faces quite different circumstances in terms of what is documented or saved from these areas, these resources provide enough information to support a restoration of generalized servant spaces.

Giving Servants Identities

The authors of *Great Tours!* suggest that house museum administrators provide their guides with short biographies of the main characters in the home's story and that these should include backstairs personalities. While not all sites will be fortunate enough to have names of servants listed in on-site archives, the availability of information from the decennial censuses between 1870 and 1930 can often provide basic demographic information that can be the basis of servant biographies. These portraits can be used to add depth to the story told by guides. Elizabeth O'Leary's recent book on the servants at Maymont House includes a "Biographical Directory of Dooley Employees, 1880-1925," which provides excellent character sketches, of various length and detail, of the people known to have worked at the house.³⁹

Another example is the following biography of Alfred and Ivy Batten used at Brucemore combines documented information with general material about what their duties might have been.

Alfred (known to the Douglasses as "Alf") and Ivy Batten started working at Brucemore as early as 1926 and served Mrs. Douglas until her death in 1937. Alf was one of eight members of a family that came to the United States from England in 1912. Several of the Battens became associated with the Douglas family in the 1920s and 1930s. Alf's brother Albert (known as "Bert") was the first member of his family to work at Brucemore; he started as the chauffeur in 1917, and also worked there until the death of Mrs. Douglas. Alf and Bert's brothers, sisters, and nieces occasionally worked at Brucemore on a temporary basis as house sitters and servers for large parties, such as the youngest daughter Barbara's wedding reception in 1934.

Alf was the Douglasses' butler, and Ivy was a maid, most likely the ladies' maid. They earned \$150 a month when they started at Brucemore in 1926, and lived on-site, first in a bedroom on the mansion's third floor, and later in one half of the servants' duplex (after the birth of their daughter). As the butler, Alf would have been responsible for answering the door, serving the meals, taking care of silver and glass or dinnerware stored in the butler's pantry, and acting as the ranking servant of the house staff. Ivy's duties as ladies' maid would have included helping Mrs. Douglas bathe and dress, and caring for her clothing.

In 1932, the Battens had a daughter they named Gloria Barbara. Although the Douglasses hired many butler-maid couples during their residence at Brucemore, Alf and Ivy were the only members of the house staff, known to have had children while working at Brucemore (small families were more common for the head gardeners, who lived in the servants' duplex). Living in the duplex afforded them more room and privacy for their small family. Gloria was less than a year older than Ellen Douglas Jaeger's daughter Margot, and the two played together during Ellen's visits.

Biographies will assist guides in presenting information about servants in active voice versus passive voice constructions. In *Lies Across America*, James Loewen notes his frustration with continually hearing servants discussed using the passive voice, which deprives them of agency. For example, he notes that "at Hampton [an antebellum site in Maryland] guides tell the visitors that 'the right hand wing is where the laundry was done' while 'the left wing' was for the cooking." He found this use of the passive voice at most restored plantations, effectively making the slaves invisible.⁴⁰ Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small also found use of the passive voice frequently in their extensive investigation of plantations in Virginia, Georgia, and Louisiana.⁴¹ Most historic sites refer to the owners as "Mr. or Mrs. So-and-so," or by their first names as if they were close personal friends. Yet servants are often referred to either passively or with generic terms such as "the maid, the butler, the nanny." While this might be the only option for sites who have yet to uncover the names and backgrounds of servants and is certainly a better option than ignoring the activity of servants at the site, when the material is available, ways should be found to use it. Referring to servants by name gives them more of a presence and emphasizes the fact that servants were not invisible, but had names, birthplaces, and families.⁴²

It is often difficult to incorporate the biographies of servants into tours when their specific activities were not documented. At Brucemore, I use the aforementioned Alfred

Batten, one of the butlers, as an example to paint a picture of what his duties and interactions with his employers might have been. I discuss the fact that Alfred probably answered the door, and acted as an intermediary in the custom of “calling” in the great hall and study. Several rooms later in the dining room, he is in charge of serving the meal and overseeing the care of the china and silver stored in his pantry. The butler’s pantry is a symbol of his position at the top of the servant hierarchy and the trust placed in him by the homeowners. He was one of several men employed by the Douglasses, and his presence indicated their social standing.⁴³ Near the end of the tour when the group visits the servants’ bedroom, I show a photo of Alfred and Ivy sitting with the children of the head gardener [Figure B-102]. After hearing about Alfred throughout the tour, the group can finally see him. Another photograph in this room of his brother Bert, the Douglasses’ chauffeur, illustrates that several members of the Batten family worked at Brucemore either for the long- or short-term. Brucemore is fortunate enough to be able to give visitors some faces to attach to names, but even sites without visual resources can use names to discuss a servant with the same level of significance as a family member, thus providing a richer and more balanced picture of everyday life.

Most general house tours are not long enough for guides to present such detailed information about all the servants in every room. While some servants may be introduced only by their name and a description of their work and others are discussed in detail, the key is that the service areas are “peopled” and that visitors get a sense of the community that existed there. Some information may be presented in static displays for visitors to examine either in special exhibition areas or in the house itself. Brucemore has had some success in re-using exhibit panels from the “Help Wanted” exhibition in the

mansion. In particular, a chart that lists the names, positions, birthplaces, and tenures of known servants during the Douglas era has given visitors easy access to information about the size and diversity of the staff [Figure B-90]. Using exhibit panels as part of the house tour can offer some control over the interpretation of servants, which is frequently inconsistent due to the different interests of the guides or visitors. These materials can also be used to raise issues that guides are less likely to discuss. One concern about this technique is the panels' potential to slow down tours as visitors stop to look and read. Skilled guides usually find ways to deal with such situations. For example, a Brucemore guide explained at a refresher session that he points out the staff chart immediately after visitors enter the room, which gives them some time to look at the information while he speaks. Most Brucemore guides report that the panels assist their interpretation of servants.

"Put Yourself in Her Place" – The Servant's Perspective

Whenever possible, it is important to address the servant problem from the perspective of the servant. By doing so, the servant problem is depicted as a multifaceted issue that had different meanings for employees versus their employers. Some house museum collections include diaries and other documents of owner families in which domestic troubles are mentioned. However, to the best of my knowledge, there have yet to surface diaries in which servants describe how "servant problems" affected them. The best existing resources are the first person sources described in chapter one, such as the *Independent* "lifelets" and Pettingill's extensive treatment of the subject.

Although servants' perspectives were not documented as often as those of their employers, authors in national publications did not ignore the possibility of a "mistress

problem.” The phrase “servant problem” privileges the owner families as it identifies the servant as the cause of conflict. It is important to be aware of opportunities to discuss the issue from the other perspective. Many servants as well as general commentators cited causes of the problem as the fault of the mistress. Employers had unreasonable expectations of their servants, usually due to their not knowing how to do the work themselves. Pettingill addresses the restatement of “the servant girl problem” in the concluding chapter of her work:

It was observed, too, that the seven [women who supervised her] were loud and continuous in complaint against the obtainable help, zealous in advertising their own reasonable kindness and the easy lot of a maid in their household.

By my experience there would seem to be a fixed ratio between the complacency of a woman’s speech on this matter, the severity of her criticism upon the workers, her own outrageous management, and her incapacity to direct an underworker. The ‘Housekeeper’s Problem’ is a better name for the housekeeper’s difficulty, since the housekeepers contribute so largely to its bitterness.⁴⁴

The fact that there were not enough servants to meet demand gave them a certain amount of power. If their present situation or mistress did not suit them, it was usually easy for servants to find another job quickly. For example, in Lillian Pettigill’s undercover work, she worked for five different families within the span of a year. She is not terribly troubled when something doesn’t work out, since there are plenty of jobs to be had. The situation was exasperating for employers, but when looked at from the servants’ perspective, this was an important source of power. In such a “seller’s market,” servants could afford to be choosy about their employers to some extent.

One way to “put yourself in her place” quite literally is to incorporate domestic servant characters into living history programs. As illustrated in the case studies, several sites successfully interpret domestic service by using costumed guides with either first or

third person techniques. Living history is broadly defined as “anything that evokes a link with the past,” and thus does not require that interpreters be “in character.”⁴⁵ Museum professionals are not unified in their enthusiasm for first-person interpretation. However, when done accurately and engagingly, this method can have great appeal to visitors.

One model for first-person servant interpretation is provided by Margaret Lynch-Brennan in “The Servant Slant: Irish Immigrant Women Domestic Servants and Historic House Museums.” She describes ways that house museum staff can find out who the servants were, and gives an example of a program based on three themes: the immigration of young single Irish women was based on economic and social reasons, the material and social culture of their native land differed significantly from what they found in the United States, and the homes in which they worked as domestics can demonstrate positive and negative aspects of this work.⁴⁶ She follows her description of these themes with a walkthrough of a tour entitled “Who Was Biddy? The Irish Servant Girl Tour.” This model is based on an interpretative period circa 1867, and while photographs of Lindenwald are included in the article, Lynch-Brennan does not specify this tour as the production of any specific house museum. As Mary Collins, the interpreter (using a credible Irish accent) elaborates on her life and duties as suggested by the above themes as she guides her group through both the family and servant areas of the house.⁴⁷ While this model tour is specifically geared toward Irish servants, with some additional research on other ethnic groups on the part of a house museum’s staff, it could be adapted.

Lynch-Brennan suggests that house museum staff might also consider offering other kinds of domestic service tours using third-person interpretation similar to those I

experienced at Villa Louis. In the past year, Brucemore has experimented with several tours and programs using different techniques, including "living history." The staff was looking for a way to liven-up the Wednesday evening holiday tours, and I suggested having someone (who turned out to be me) dress in a servants' costume, bake cookies, and interpret the kitchen from the servants' perspective while the visitors stopped for their treat. This addition to the regular holiday tour turned out to be very successful with little additional promotion.⁴⁸ My uniform consisted of a simple black dress, and an apron and cap that were modeled on those worn by a servant whose photograph was found in one of the Douglasses' scrapbooks. On the kitchen table near the tray of cookies, I set up the photo of the servant in uniform and one of a cook named Henry who worked at Brucemore in the 1930s.

I had several goals for my presentation: to describe the technology and amenities of the kitchen as the Douglasses' servants would have known it (the advantages of the circa 1927 electric refrigerator helped me interpret this theme), the ethnic backgrounds of the cooks known to have worked at Brucemore, and how servants might have experienced the holiday season. I reminded the group that while most people today get Christmas off, this would have been one of the busiest workdays for the Brucemore servants. I used the cookies (snickerdoodles and spritz, both dating at least as far back as the early twentieth century) as part of my interpretation. The Douglas daughters remembered many of their cooks by some of the ethnic dishes they prepared, so it is possible that either the German or Swedish cooks might have made spritz during the holidays. I also provided the names of the cooks and their ethnic backgrounds as part of my presentation.

I found this program to be educational on a variety of levels. The visitors who took these tours responded very enthusiastically to my presentation and felt comfortable asking questions about the servants and their duties, so clearly this was an effective means of interpretation for many. The guides who gave tours of the rest of the house told me that they didn't realize how much there was to say about the kitchen until they heard me talk about it. From my perspective, I learned a little about the isolation inherent in the life of a servant. I did not leave the kitchen during the four hours of evening tours since I was constantly working on cookies, cleaning my utensils, or talking to the tour groups. I had no idea how many people were in the house at any given time and had to rely on other staff members to let me know when a group was coming and how many were in it so I could pour the correct number of cups of cider. I realized that I was fortunate compared to the Douglasses' servants, since I did have regular contact and interaction with visitors to the house, as opposed to the cook who never saw the reactions to her hard work and probably rarely saw the visitors when she was confined to the kitchen. This experiment was successful enough to repeat the program and encouraged the staff to develop similar ways to bring the Brucemore servants to life.

Historic houses can give their visitors an even more direct experience of domestic service by asking them to put themselves in the shoes of a servant through role-playing. This technique generally works best for children, who tend to be less inhibited and more comfortable with imagining themselves as someone else, but a small number of sites have experimented similar adult programs. The Campbell House in Spokane, Washington won the National Council on Public History's Student Project Award for their work on a new approach to the site's interpretive tour.⁴⁹ Visitors are asked to play a Campbell

family member, servant, or friend; they are provided with booklets that explain who their character is and where they fit in the narrative. The tour is in essence a scripted play, which asks the visitors to participate by reading their character's dialogue, printed in the booklets. Three servants are included: the coachman, the cook, and the second-floor maid. The tour takes a unique approach to getting visitors involved by giving them parts to read, which likely is less intimidating than improvisation.⁵⁰ However, the scripted approach does not encourage the spontaneity and flexibility that can be valuable parts of the guided tour.

Ultimately, the goal in interpreting domestic service should be a balanced discussion of what life was like for both parties in the domestic equation. Barbara and Cary Carson remind their readers that "A full cast of characters is needed most importantly, because social history has a higher calling as community history. . . . Social history worth its salt deals with ordinary people *as well as*, not rather than, the elite, and with everyday activities *no less than* world class events."⁵¹

Bringing Home the Message – Making Interpretation of Domestic Servants Relevant to Contemporary Life

Interpretation is most effective when it can be related directly to the personal experiences of the visitor. Karen Lee Davis and James G. Gibb note that "History museums that fail to provide the linkage between the past and the present undermine their role as educators."⁵² For example, guides often compare old technology to current technology (such as an Edison phonograph and a modern compact disc player) to illustrate the impact of entertainment technology on daily life and to help visitors understand what to many is a foreign object. Today, most visitors can relate to

housework – they have become in essence their own maids-of-all-work, but with more sophisticated equipment. When I have described the duties of the general housework “girl” to tour groups, I often get reactions, particularly from women in the group, that suggest that they understand how hard this life could be.⁵³ The work has simply shifted from servants to the lady of the house. Helping the visitor relate to the work of servants is relatively easy and uncontroversial, which makes it a relatively common topic on a house museum tour.

However, taking the next steps into more difficult terrain can be tricky. Gerald George believes that a historic site “can be a catalyst for debates and dialogues if one has the courage to address difficult issues and fill in the ‘gaps in our stories.’”⁵⁴ The servant problem raises many difficult issues: interacting on an intimate level with people from different ethnic and economic backgrounds and the subordination of people based on race, ethnicity, class, or gender. These issues are still present in today’s society, and not all guides will feel comfortable making this connection with visitors.

Helping visitors understand the relationships between mistress and servant is more challenging since the social dynamic of having live-in domestic help is rare in the United States and has been for many years now. However, that isn’t to say that no one today hires the labor of strangers to do their housework. Middle-class women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries hired servants to free up time to pursue activities that symbolized gentility, such as education, community work, leisure activities, and consumption of goods and services. A parallel situation has arisen since the women’s liberation movement. In the early 1970s, Betty Friedan and the National Organization of Women approved hiring out housework to allow women to have time for both careers

and families.⁵⁵ The trend toward hiring out housework continued into the economically prosperous late-1990s. Between 1995 and 1999, the number of households hiring a cleaner or service at least once a month or more increased 53 percent. At the turn of the twenty-first century, 14 to 18 percent of households employed an outside housecleaner.⁵⁶ While this is a relatively small percentage, consider that in a tour group of ten people, at least one or two has a non-family member cleaning their home; this is especially likely when you consider that visitors tend to come from the middle class or higher.

One would hope that the conditions for domestic workers have improved since 1900. Many more professions and educational opportunities have opened to women in the past thirty years, yet a startling number must rely on domestic and other service industry jobs to eke out a subsistence lifestyle, and often it takes two jobs to make ends meet in the most basic of ways. One way that the “servant problem” has been solved in recent years has been the emergence of corporate cleaning services such as Merry Maids and The Maids, International. These companies have eliminated “the peculiar intimacy of the employer-employee relationship.” Clients now hire the service instead of the labor of one person (still predominately female), and the work is typically done in teams. These workers also clean many houses each day, so they may not work for the same clients every day or week.⁵⁷

Although corporate cleaning services have brought a more comfortable impersonality to the hiring of domestic workers, their employees still experience many of the same inequities tolerated by those in their shoes one hundred years ago. By using investigative techniques similar to those employed by Lillian Pettingill circa 1905, Barbara Ehrenreich worked four minimum wage jobs (including one as a maid) in three

cities to determine whether it is possible to make ends meet with such employment.

Ehrenreich is careful to note that her experiment had some limitations and that she had some advantages that would not permit a complete replication of the life of the truly impoverished, but her book based on these experiences, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (2001), suggests that some aspects of working in paid domestic service have not changed.

During the month Ehrenreich spent cleaning houses as an employee of The Maids, International, she experienced many of the same indignities frequently noted by servants of the past. She had to abide by very strict rules imposed by management (which in this case is the company rather than the owners of the houses she cleans): she is not allowed to eat or drink anything while she is in the house working; she is not allowed any breaks (the time spent in the car between jobs is considered her break), and cursing is not allowed at the jobs, in the house, or in the car. Servants of the past also usually lived according to their employers' stringent rules, and during their "breaks" in the afternoon, they were still expected to drop everything to answer the door or answer the mistress's call. Like servants of the early 1900s, Ehrenreich was tested by homeowners. Several servants of the past remarked that their employers often left money lying about to test the servant's impulse to steal. One homeowner serviced by Ehrenreich's "team" placed "little mounds of dirt here and there just so she can see if they're still there when we're done."⁵⁸

The social stigma of domestic service had been a major deterrent for working women in the early twentieth century, and Ehrenreich's experience suggests that this stigma lingers yet today. Ehrenreich and her coworkers at The Maids wear uniforms,

kelly-green pants and sunflower-yellow polo shirts. These markers of lower status place them below other minimum wage workers, as Ehrenreich observes during interactions at convenience stores and supermarkets:

I used to stop [at the supermarket] on my way home from work, but couldn't take the stares, which are easily translatable into: What are you doing here? And no wonder she's poor, she's got a beer in her shopping cart! True I don't look so good by the end of the day and probably smell like eau de toilet and sweat, but it's the brilliant green-and-yellow uniform that gives me away, like prison clothes on a fugitive.⁵⁹

Ehrenreich's foray into contemporary domestic service illustrates that although a smaller percentage of women work as domestics today, those who do suffer from many of the same injustices of one hundred years ago. In some ways, live-in domestic servants of 1900 were slightly better off in terms of food and shelter, although for many this could not make up for the feudal labor situation they found themselves in.

Cleaning companies also use versions of the "ideal maid" in their marketing that are updated, but remarkable similar to the images of the perfect maid in black and white livery. A marketing piece from Merry Maids [Figure B-103] shows a happy, blond, apparently native-born American woman wearing the company's uniform of a green polo shirt and khakis happily raising her toilet brushes in the air. The text promotes their workers as professionals, who like servants of one hundred years ago, work to make sure their employers maintain their social status: "We love keeping your home—and your reputation—spotless." Most viewers of this ad probably are aware that hiring the Merry Maids will not bring this trim, energetic, blond "maid" to clean their home, yet the marketing executives who designed it are likely playing off the desire for just this sort of household worker.

In terms of ethnic groups in domestic service, the point can be made that even today immigrants often get their first jobs in service industries, as restaurant cooks and waiters, hotel housekeepers, and maids for companies like the one Ehrenreich worked for. A third-grade teacher who brought her class to Brucemore poignantly made this point. The class had eaten lunch and had a tour of a local Chinese restaurant before coming to the estate. When I introduced material about Brucemore's servants, the teacher reminded the class that most of the people working at the restaurant were also immigrants working in similar service industry jobs.

The increases in immigration in regions that are relatively homogenous still create anxiety. Reacting to Iowa's shrinking population, Governor Tom Vilsack has advocated loosening the state's immigration limits to allow more foreign-born workers to move to Iowa. While Vilsack hoped to encourage both skilled and unskilled immigrant workers to rejuvenate Iowa's workforce, most immigrants have found work in meatpacking plants, the same places that took them in during the early days of industry. Iowa citizens did not accept this proposal wholeheartedly; a September 2000 *Des Moines Register* poll indicated that 58 percent of those polled were opposed to Vilsack's strategy. Clearly, the xenophobia that was often inherent in the servant problem still exists in some places today, and the parallels could be addressed on tours thematically focused on the servant problem.

House museums that are just getting started with their interpretation of domestic service may not be ready to dive into such complicated and potentially controversial topics. Such discussion is perhaps the next big step once a site has become comfortable with the story it tells about domestic servants. Even if a site is not ready to tackle these

issues on every tour, guides should be familiar with them and have given them some thought. In training guides, museum administrators should consider discussing current immigration from the local, regional, or national levels as well as labor statistics and minimum wage work. The more fluent guides are in the links between past and present, the more convincing they will be in showing that history has meaning in modern life.

Notes

¹ Gerald George, "Historic House Museum Malaise: A Conference Considers What's Wrong" *Forum Journal* (Spring 2002): 12-19. This article was also published in *History News* 57, no. 4 (Autumn 2002): 21-25.

² George, 14.

³ George, 15.

⁴ Jessica Foy Donnelly, "Introduction," in *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, ed. Jessica Foy Donnelly (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 9.

⁵ Barbara Franco, "What's New in Exhibits?" *Cultural Resource Management* 23, no. 5 (2000): 48.

⁶ "Maymont Foundation, Implementation Grant Proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities, January 2002," 7-8.

⁷ Within the past ten years, the National Park Service has done some exceptional work with community members in terms of soliciting recommendations from those who live with and use the site. Many of the resulting reports are published on NPS web pages, which provide excellent models for other public historians. For one example, see William Blair Curtis, "General Management Plan: Summary of Public Scoping Workshops, September 15 and October 27, 1998," Hampton National Historic Site, 23 January 2003, <<http://www.nps.gov/hamp/GMP/gmp3.htm>> (13 March 2004).

⁸ Historic House Museums Listserv, <<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/historichousemuseums>>. As of 3 March 2003, the list had 245 members. Other lists, such as MUSEUM-L and H-MUSEUM provide broader topical and international coverage.

⁹ Kim Moon, "'Raising our Sites' Integrating Women's History into Museums" *Cultural Resource Management* 20, no. 3 (1997): 22. The fourteen sites included the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester; Drake Well Historic Site, Titusville; Folklife Demonstration Center for Gender Studies, Seton Hill College; The Library Company of Philadelphia; Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania; Lycoming County Historical Society, Williamsport; Lehigh County Historical Society, Allentown; Lackawanna County Historical Society, Scranton; Landis Valley Museum, Lancaster; Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, Elverson; Hershey Museum; Old Economy Village, Ambridge; Joseph Priestly House, Northumberland; Pennsbury Manor, Morrisville.

¹⁰ Moon, 23.

¹¹ Moon, 24.

¹² Belle Grove, Montpelier, Oatlands, and Woodlawn (all in Virginia), Cliveden (Philadelphia), and the Decatur House (Washington, D.C.) Two other plantation sites, Shadows-on-the-Teche (Louisiana) and Drayton Hall (Charleston, South Carolina) participated on a long-distance basis.

¹³ Susan P. Schreiber, "Interpreting Slavery at National Trust Sites: A Case Study" *Cultural Resource Management* 23, no. 5 (2000): 52.

¹⁴ The preface of *Great Tours!* includes an example of this type of tour, using the fictional Caleb Crawley House as its example: "Isn't this front hall just something else? Those dentil cornices and Palladian windows are considered by many to be second only to those at Mount Vernon. Mr. Crawley had the most exquisite taste, which you can see in the superb Chippendale chairs, which are similar to what we think he most likely would have had because his taste was so exquisite. If you step this way you will see another fine example of the type of furniture which we feel sure Mr. Crawley would have owned—this absolutely fabulous escritoire that we just had appraised and is the most valuable thing in the house." Levy, et. al., xi.

¹⁵ Levy, et. al., 25.

¹⁶ These manuals have many contemporary parallels that can be used to make this point clearer to visitors. For example, *Martha Stewart Living*, Home and Garden Television, and other sources provide domestic ideals for today's audience. However, most readers and viewers probably don't have the lifestyle these sources encourage. Instead, they create standards that some can only aspire to.

¹⁷ In *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (London and New York: Verso, 1996), Richard Ohmann gives a good example of the regional bias of mass publications. "The *Journal* ran a series (in 1897-98) of photographs taking readers 'Inside of a Hundred Homes,' in 'all different parts of the country.' The May 1898 installment depicted twenty rooms, porches, and terraces. Seventeen were in the metropolitan East and its suburban penumbra, or in California. One of the others was a vacation cottage. That left just two homes from the rest of the country, one in Michigan and one in Hamilton, Ohio, the latter standing as the lone representative of the small-town heartland. . . . For the most part, the contemporary U.S. appeared in those magazines as the eastern seaboard from Washington to Boston, with less frequent glimpses of California, Chicago, the aristocratic South, the scenic or untamed West," 231.

¹⁸ In addition to servants who lived and worked in private households, others lived and worked in hotels and boarding houses. When setting up such a tally, one should consider how and whether to count servants that did not work in private households.

- ¹⁹ The James J. Hill House displays framed photographs on a fireplace mantel in the servants' hall. Bruce more exhibits photographs (mounted on foam core) in the servants' bedroom.
- ²⁰ This was a component of the special exhibit on servants mounted at Bruce more, "Help Wanted: Working at Bruce more, 1907-1937." Maymont House plans to have a similar element in their permanent exhibition on domestic service.
- ²¹ Rex M. Ellis, "Interpreting the Whole House," in *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, ed. Jessica Foy Donnelly (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 67.
- ²² Barbara Abramoff Levy, Sandra Mackenzie Lloyd, and Susan Porter Schreiber, *Great Tours! Thematic Tours and Guide Training for Historic Sites* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001), 23-24.
- ²³ This approach has also been used successfully at another National Trust site, Cliveden, in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. A detailed description of their development of interpretive storylines and themes is presented in Sandra Mackenzie Lloyd, "Creating Memorable Visits: How to Develop and Implement Theme-Based Tours," in *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, ed. Jessica Foy Donnelly (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 210-230.
- ²⁴ Anne L. Vrooman, "The Servant Question in Social Evolution" *Arena*, June 1901, 645.
- ²⁵ Barbara A. Levy and Susan Schreiber, "The View from the Kitchen" *History News* 50, no. 2 (March/April 1995): 20.
- ²⁶ Barbara and Cary Carson, "Things Unspoken: Learning Social History from Artifacts," in *Ordinary People and Everyday Life*, ed. James B. Gardner and George Rollie Adams (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1996), 194.
- ²⁷ Mildred Maddocks Bentley, "The Psychology of Servants" *Ladies' Home Journal*, December 1925, 159.
- ²⁸ "Servants and Labor-Saving Devices," *Good Housekeeping*, December 1912, 860.
- ²⁹ Erie L. Preston, "Service Rooms of Modern Homes," *House and Garden*, November 1907, 185.
- ³⁰ Patricia West, "Uncovering and Interpreting History at Historic House Museums" in *Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation*, Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman, ed. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 93-94.

³¹ Clark-Lewis notes that live-in servants hoping to make the transition to day work needed to earn the laundress's respect before they could hope to win them as allies. But once they did, laundresses provided support and encouragement, as in the experience of Mayme Gibson: "After a while I could talk to the laundress. See, they worked house to house, always, and they didn't care. They'd do it and didn't feel like it was just picking up work neither. They made really good and didn't have that woman on they backs day and night. Now they'd know where jobs was. Not doing piecework, too. This one called Dee helped me find my very first work out. She was nice, but it was over a year before she helped me and another girl get set and in some day work." Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, *Living In, Living Out: African American Domestic in Washington, D.C., 1910-1940* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 141.

³² Some experts on housekeeping espoused the ideas of Frederick Taylor by encouraging efficiency and scientific management in the home. Christine Frederick applied these methods in solving the servant problem. *The New Housekeeping: Efficiency Studies in Home Management* (Garden City and New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1925).

³³ Charles E. White, "The Servant in the Little House," *Ladies' Home Journal*, November 1915, 54.

³⁴ Hanna Tachau, "Furnishing the Servants' Rooms," *House Beautiful*, October 1920, 288-289, 316. Other authors offered similar advice on servants' accommodations, and warned housekeepers that using the excuse that servants' were used to poverty to avoid giving them nice rooms was not acceptable. T. W. Hotchkiss gave the following "Advice to Employers" in a 1909 issue of *Good Housekeeping*: "It is not sufficient answer for any employer to allege that, in the servant's home in the 'old country,' the pigs lived in the kitchen. Good, plain food, clean living rooms which are well lighted, warmed and aired, good beds and clean bedding, bathing facilities and extra time free, are among the ordinary rights for which every servant in this country should stipulate when making an engagement; they should not be classed as special privileges." *Good Housekeeping*, September 1909, 244. Finally, when the "Visiting Housekeeper" is asked for help solving the servant problem, she noted the following after seeing the servant's room: "I knew the room was one of those cold, dreary boxes which are arranged for servants on the top floor of many big apartments. . . . The comparison between the sunny house downstairs and this homeless place under the eaves was sharp enough for a child to see. The first girl had made a pitiful effort at arranging the furniture. There was a colored print from the butcher's and a cheap calendar pinned to the dingy white wall. . . . Mrs. McHenry shrugged angry shoulders. 'It's very good for a servant; they are used to this sort of thing. At home they live in slums.'" *Good Housekeeping*, March 1911, 341.

³⁵ Lillian Pettingill, *Toilers of the Home: The Record of a College Woman's Experience as a Domestic Servant* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co, 1905), 314-15.

³⁶ Ellis, 67.

³⁷ U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Furnishings Report for "Lindenwald"*, by Carol E. Kohan (Washington, D.C., 1986), 35-36; 272-277.

³⁸ David Wallace, *Sagamore Hill Historic Furnishings Report*, Vol.2 (Washington, D.C., 1991).

³⁹ Elizabeth O'Leary, *From Morning to Night: Domestic Service in Maymont House and the Gilded Age South* (University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville and London, 2003), 127-148. Developing such biographies for slaves and servants is also recommended by the authors of *Great Tours!*

⁴⁰ James Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York: The New Press, 1999), 339.

⁴¹ Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 107, 134-137.

⁴² Mentioning the names of servants can also lead to a discussion of the fact that servants were typically addressed by their Christian names, while they addressed their employers formally. Many servants objected to this convention. One respondent to Lucy Maynard Salmon's survey wrote the following: "A woman who had been for years a domestic employee left her place on account of sickness, and ultimately opened a small bakeshop. Her former employer called on her one day, and said, 'Well, Sarah, how do you like your work?' She replied, 'I never thought of it before, but now that you speak, I think the reason I like it so well is because everybody calls me Miss Clark.'" *Domestic Service* (London and New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901), 157.

⁴³ See chapter one for more details about the significance the gender and domestic servants.

⁴⁴ Pettingill, 365-366.

⁴⁵ Stacy F. Roth, *Past into Present: Effective Techniques for First-Person Historical Presentation*. (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 9.

⁴⁶ Margaret Lynch-Brennan, "The Servant Slant: Irish Immigrant Women Domestic Servants and Historic House Museums," in *Her Past Around Us: Interpreting Sites for Women's History*, Polly Welts Kaufmann and Katherine T. Corbett, ed. (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 2003), 124-130.

⁴⁷ Lynch-Brennan, 130-134.

⁴⁸ The only promotion for the living history aspect of the tour was either via staff when people called to inquire about holiday tours, and a photograph of me dressed in costume holding up a tray of cookies that ran in the local newspaper the day before our first Wednesday evening. The attendance on those three Wednesdays far exceeded the evening tour attendance of any previous year.

⁴⁹ "NCPH Award Winners," *Public History News* 23, no. 4 (Summer 2003), 6.

⁵⁰ "The Campbell House Story, Revised Narrator's Script," 2002. Thanks to the staff at the Campbell House for providing me with a copy of their work.

⁵¹ Barbara and Cary Carson, 192.

⁵² Karen Lee Davis and James G. Gibb, "Unpuzzling the Past: Critical Thinking in History Museums" *Museum Studies Journal* 3, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 1988), 41.

⁵³ Some comment that "Today this person is called 'Mom!'"

⁵⁴ George, 18.

⁵⁵ Barbara Ehrenreich, "Maid to Order: The Politics of Other Women's Work," *Harper's Magazine*, April 2000, 60-61.

⁵⁶ Ehrenreich, 62.

⁵⁷ Ehrenreich, 64.

⁵⁸ Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2001), 93.

⁵⁹ Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, 100.

CONCLUSION

Like Sarah Vowell, whose confession of being a “history buff” opened this work, I too have a passion for visiting historic places and reading about people and events of the past (although working as a professional in the field probably makes me more than a “buff”). Family vacations most likely planted the seeds that blossomed into a career in public history. These trips usually were never very long or extravagant, but one vacation has always stood out in my memory. My dad, in particular, enjoyed going to Lincoln sites, so during a week-long driving trip from our home in western Illinois to Nashville, we stopped at Abraham Lincoln’s birthplace in Hodgenville, Kentucky. After viewing the orientation film in the visitor center, we were all excited to see the spring Lincoln played in as a child, the tree he sat under, and the celebrated log cabin in which this famous president began his life. However, what we found was quite different: the spring had dried up, the tree had succumbed to disease and was now a stump, and the cabin was made of logs that “may have been” those of Lincoln’s cabin.¹ I remember that we all felt kind of ripped off based on our expectation that we would be encountering these authentic elements of the early life of a legendary man.

Like most visitors to historic sites, we had in mind an ideal and largely mythic vision of the subject of our visit. When reality did not match that expectation, and alternative experiences were not offered that might compensate for it, it was hard to avoid disappointment. Looking back from my current vantage point, having investigated the “ideal and real” aspects of the interpretations offered at history museums and historic sites and houses, I wonder how I would experience the birthplace site now. I have sometimes asked myself, if I were the director of this site, how would I use these

somewhat dubious objects to teach a meaningful and “accurate” history about the early life of Abraham Lincoln?

I had my first opportunity to start looking for those answers during my last semester of the M.A. program in Art History when I decided to get some firsthand experience in the museum profession. Like most looking to break into this field, I started by volunteering. I became a guide at the Old Capitol Museum on the University of Iowa campus in early 1996, which turned into a work-study position after I entered the American Studies graduate program that fall. While I worked as a weekend supervisor answering phones and doing other minor administrative tasks, my primary duty was giving interpretive tours to the public. The training manual focused heavily on the building’s furnishings rather than how the territorial and state governments functioned during the years in which Iowa City was the capital, and most of the furniture was period or reproduction. The interiors were beautifully restored, from the spotless ivory painted walls to the shiny wood floor.

I remember feeling conflicted about how to interpret this building and its contents. The structure itself was “original” but the inside was much different than I imagined it had been when it served as the capitol, considering that horses had been stalled in the lower level, the stoves would have produced a layer of black soot on the walls and ceiling, and unpaved roads would have made for masses of muddy footprints on the wood floor, not to mention the results of using spittoons.² Since most visitors marveled at how beautiful and well-kept the place was, I constructed my tour around the story of Old Capitol’s restoration, which was well-documented. I did address some of the

activities that took place in the building and the use of some of the objects, but I felt most comfortable telling a story about how the interiors now looked by describing the discovery of certain architectural features and selection of the furnishings. My guide experiences made me increasingly aware of the intellectual challenges faced by museum curators and interpreters. Using the story of the building's restoration gave me an opportunity to talk to visitors about more than the objects on display, but the choices behind them. The Old Capitol job also convinced me that I wanted a future as a "museum person" and the rest, as they say, is history.

This dissertation has required me to take an activity that I enjoy personally and interact with professionally and look at it critically through the lens of ten years of graduate school education. Throughout my research and writing, I frequently have reflected on my multiple "identities" of visitor, professional, and scholar and how each of those perspectives influences my perception of how authentic objects are interpreted. The visit to Lincoln's birthplace is a typical example of the expectations visitors bring to historic sites, both in terms of the objects they come to see and the heroic portrayal of great men. The story of the birthplace cabin and its most likely inauthentic logs is a great opportunity for the National Park Service (the site's administrator) to educate visitors about the construction of Lincoln's historic persona, but this potential was (and to some degree continues to be) neglected. My experience at the Old Capitol reveals how I resolved my own dilemma of interpreting an authentic structure that has been highly idealized through restoration.

Working as a historian at Bruce more has also taught me the importance of looking beyond the “great man” and his possessions into the lives of a site’s women, servants, and the very ordinary activities that infrequently entered into the historical record. This professional experience has made me sympathetic to the challenges and limitations of historic house museums and historic sites in general. Having experienced the pressure of working on a limited budget, training new guides, and compromising with co-workers on the wording of labels or the choice of images and artifacts for exhibits, I am sensitive to the fact that despite an institution’s best intentions, powerful interpretations often are diluted by the time they reach the visitor. As a scholar, however, I have high expectations for the work I do as a public historian and the experiences I have at other historic sites.

The differences between working as a historian in a museum as opposed to the academy have long pervaded the discussions of how best to apply new historical methodologies at historic sites.³ Public historians, especially those who bring scholarly approaches cultivated during the process of obtaining their Ph.D.s, want to be taken seriously. In “Behind the Public Presentations: Research and Scholarship at Living History Museums of Early America,” John Krugler documents a persistent feeling of inferiority that has plagued public historians for many years:

Jacquetta M. Haley of Historic Hudson Valley writes that ‘historians who work in history museums tend to be step-children, perhaps even orphans, of the historical profession.’ While she concedes that there has been some amelioration of late, her impression is that ‘scholars attribute little value to the contributions of history museums.’ Others comment that scholars are ‘indifferent,’ ‘not aware,’ or ‘skeptical’ about the research efforts of living museum historians. They do not perceive museum research as providing ‘equivalently’ rigorous products’; they ignore or undervalue museum research and scholarship. . . . Colonial Williamsburg administrators believe that academics ‘do not always appreciate the depth of scholarly research that occurs

in many museums' and that many fail to recognize as legitimate the research that 'goes into our interpretive effort.'⁴

Historians in both institutions adjust their methods and messages based on their administrative organizations and audiences. Scholars working in museums typically work in a more collaborative environment than those working in academic departments. For example, exhibition development is typically a team project with each member working as an expert on a particular topic or contributing specific skills. The curator or consulting scholar may do the bulk of the historical research, but the way that material is used in the final project will be vastly different after it is filtered through the expertise of the graphic designers and museum educators than it would be if the historian were to publish his/her own book based on the same research.⁵ Museum exhibitions themselves do not include the scholarly apparatus of footnotes, appendices, and bibliographies, which makes publications of the scholarship desirable companions. The trade-off is that the work of public historians has the potential to reach a much larger audience than the typical scholarly publication. The traditional scholar working in an academic department also has the benefit of "academic freedom," which does not really exist at history museums and historic sites that are far more beholden to those who fund them, be they the public or the increasingly necessary (from a financial perspective at least) corporate sponsor.

Representing the differences between public and academic historians is often described in such binary terms, but there can be far more shades of gray than might initially appear. There have been books with appeal beyond a scholar's academic peers, just as there have been museum exhibits that successfully employ the techniques and complexity found in the work of traditional historians (the exhibits described in chapter

two from the National Museum of American History, for example). Dealing with these creative tensions is the great challenge of having one foot in each of these institutions. My perspective based on inhabiting this middle ground and my research on the interpretation of domestic servants at historic house museums has led me to several conclusions about the successes, ongoing challenges, and overall impact of thirty years of more scholarly interpretations based on the “new social history.”

History museums and historic houses may be placed on a wide spectrum according to their use of social history, by which I mean not just the inclusion of race, class, and gender in their interpretation, but the interpretation of objects within their historical contexts rather than as objects in themselves. The old cliché that house museum tours tend to be made up of a laundry list of the furnishings accompanied by a few anecdotal tales about the home’s owners is still around for good reason—tours like this still exist. However, the efforts to eradicate this approach are strong. Since social historians entered the museum profession in the mid-1970s, a greater emphasis has been placed on the way an object can be understood and interpreted in its historical context, and it has come to be standard practice to teach guides to coax the larger cultural meanings from artifacts.

Changing conceptions of what is authentic have also been underway in the past thirty years. The efforts of social history scholars have expanded the kinds of “real things” history museums collect. It has become just as legitimate to save and interpret mass-produced items or things that belonged to “ordinary” people (including women, and people of all races, ethnicities and classes), as it had been to preserve rare or hand-made objects and the possessions of people (largely white, upper-class males) deemed

historically significant. This trend has been slower to take hold in the preservation of historic sites and houses, but recently, tenements and other vernacular buildings have been recognized as valuable cultural documents. Including domestic servants in the interpretations of the wealthy and/or famous offers a new, and more realistic, look at old places, although as I have demonstrated, more challenging approaches to the interpretation of work, class, and ethnic differences are needed to provide the depth and nuance their stories deserve.

The changing functions of museums and historic sites have also influenced the way authenticity is interpreted. Over the past thirty years, the museum has increasingly functioned as a “community center” serving diverse audiences; African American and ethnic museums have been pioneers in this effort. They have also become increasingly inquiry-driven; instead of passively presenting information about artifacts, they engage the visitor in active learning and questioning. While these two functions can (and usually are) still based on “real” objects, museums are also experimenting with locating the “authentic” in the experience rather than in an object. In *The Museum in Transition*, Hilde Hein argues that in much of current museum practice “the end is the achievement of an experience that is genuine, but undergoing such an experience does not depend on mediation by an authentic object. The experience might be triggered by a multitude of devices, not all of which are real, genuine, and material.”⁶ Science centers and children’s museums are good models of the inquiry-driven and “authentic experience” approaches because their collections typically are not historical artifacts, but devices built specifically to reward curiosity and provide a realistic hands-on experience. The lessons of these

institutions are increasingly being applied at traditionally object-based “hands-off” museums.

The desire to provide an authentic experience has been a part of historic house museum practice from the beginning. Restoration projects attempt to recreate “how it really was” to help visitors imagine what life was like in the past, although the focus has been largely on what it may have been like for a very small segment of the population. Research at historic sites and house is, in some ways, an endless process of making the place more authentic, as Colonial Williamsburg’s various structural and interpretive overhauls have demonstrated. These sites employ a variety of techniques to enhance the authenticity of their environments, such as the use of “props” (fake food, facsimiles, and other objects that make period rooms look “lived in”) and first-person interpretation, which attempts to fully immerse the visitor in a different world.⁷ Plimoth Plantation in Massachusetts is the best example of a site that commits itself to the most “authentic” experience, even though all of its elements, the site, buildings, and material culture are reproductions. It is through interpreters that they become “real.”

Education vs. Entertainment

The popular culture phenomenon of “reality television,” in which “ordinary people” are selected to participate in various scenarios from basic survival to finding Mr. or Ms. Right, has led to a curious twist in learning about everyday life in the past. Beginning in 1999, PBS has aired a series of programs that have asked contemporary people to live according to the rules and customs of earlier times for spans of three to six months, a concept that blurs the line between education and entertainment. The “House” series has thus far covered four eras, two in England, two in the United States. *The 1900*

House followed the lives of a middle-class English family living in a house completely retrofitted to 1900, in which they were required to eat, drink, dress, and live according to what was available to people of their class in 1900. *Frontier House* focused on three families who volunteered to live like mid-nineteenth-century pioneers for five months, after which they were “graded” by a panel of experts regarding whether each family would have been successfully prepared for a long winter. *Manor House* took the series back to England and investigated class issues by installing a middle-class English family as the lord and lady of a grand country estate during the Edwardian period and recruited thirteen people to serve as various types of servants. Most recently, *Colonial House* put several families and individuals in the position of creating a viable New England colony in 1628.

As Richard Handler and Eric Gable noticed during their fieldwork at Colonial Williamsburg, much of the authenticity of the “House” series is located in the presence of dirt. These programs seem more “real” in part because the participants truly become filthy by following the rules of earlier eras, unlike first-person interpreters at historic houses and sites, who are generally clean and well-groomed regardless of the types of chores they might be engaged in. The “House” series is not without flaws, due mostly to the inability of most participants to suppress expectations based on their twenty-first century lives. These programs strip away the nostalgia of the “good old days,” but they retain the Whiggish notion of progress that one encounters in many museums. Besides the presence of dirt, perhaps the most authentic “feature” of these programs has been the replication of class differences. This is particularly evident in *Manor House*, in which upstairs and downstairs residents quickly fell into the appropriate class relationship, but

also in the case of the domestic servant in *1900 House* and the indentured servants in *Colonial House*. I would argue that the degree to which class becomes a key dividing line in these programs indicates that it is an issue that continues to be problematic in modern America, one with the relevance to be taken seriously at historic sites and houses.

Visitors to heritage sites tend to respond very favorably to such experiential approaches to teaching history. Dramatic or interactive programs are consistently popular, as indicated by examples from my case studies, and the full immersion of the “House” series is also available to the average visitor at Conner Prairie through their overnight “Weekend on the Farm” experiences.⁸ Despite their popularity, some museum professionals and scholars are uncomfortable with the way these programs blur the line between education and entertainment. There is no question that “authentic” experiences sell tickets; but it is ironic that the forces that created these simulations (scholars who introduced new social history and more rigorous scholarship) ultimately are used to argue that history museums have become more like theme parks than classrooms.

However, the appropriation of some elements of “entertainment” or popular culture offer engaging opportunities for historic sites, and they don’t have to be stripped of conflict and differences in order to attract audiences, especially since these are key to the telling of any good story. Even though some museum historians admit that “museums have to play to an audience that pays to come in, that expects to be entertained,” that doesn’t mean that stories need to be whitewashed.⁹ Movies and television frequently include controversial historical issues in thought provoking ways, admittedly using varying levels of accuracy. *Amistad* and *Schindler’s List* are particularly good examples of films that have depicted the grimmer moments of world

history. The sometimes tense relationships between domestic servants and their employers have also been depicted in movies and television, as in Robert Altman's film *Gosford Park* and the PBS series *Upstairs, Downstairs*, both of which I often refer to when speaking to general audiences about house museums and domestic servants. Dramatic techniques employed by professional actors or skilled interpreters may offer some of the most engaging ways to depict the difficulties inherent in the servant-employer relationship. A discussion between the audience, performers, and site historians following the performance can be added to reinforce the program's educational goals.

Does Social History Sell?

In their study of Colonial Williamsburg, Handler and Gable argue that the site's corporate culture and obsession with the "bottom line" are detrimental to its ability to present "real" social history. Most museum professionals do not want to admit that cash flow has an impact on its programming, but unfortunately it does. Two respondents to my house museum survey indicated that getting the upper-level management on board to offer programs focusing on domestic servants had been difficult at their sites, in part due to a concern that they would not be profitable.

Several high-profile and extremely well-respected museums recently have suffered financial crises resulting in layoffs and closures after the return on expansion projects failed to meet even minimum expectations in terms of attendance. In Richmond, Virginia, the Valentine Museum became a leader in mounting critically acclaimed exhibitions that have addressed slavery, Richmond's working class, and cigarette smoking with sensitivity and complexity.¹⁰ In 1994, the museum opened a multimillion-

dollar complex called Riverside, which boasted extensive financial support by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The site, formerly the Tredegar Ironworks, was to offer the most comprehensive social history interpretation through presenting the stories of immigrants, African Americans, women, and the working class. The now cliché adage, “If you build it, they will come,” did not apply to Riverside, which closed less than one year after opening after attendance failed to meet expectations and debts mounted.

The Baltimore City Life Museums met a similar fate around the same time. Less than a year after opening a new exhibition center, the museum complex closed, also due to poor attendance.¹¹ During its ten-year history the City Life Museums explored many aspects of Baltimore history, perhaps best illustrated by their “living history dramas” called “Steps in Time,” which featured performances depicting tension between Irish immigrants and free blacks in the labor market and religious conflict. The museum also made many efforts to work with city residents by documenting neighborhoods and Baltimore citizens from all walks of life.¹²

A third museum, also proud of the way its staff has applied the new social history to its exhibitions, is still open but is having similar attendance problems. The Historical Society of Washington [D. C.] recently moved from its headquarters in the historic Heurich House to a beautifully restored former library and opened the City Museum of Washington in May 2003. Given its prime location in the city, directly across from the Washington Convention Center and close to popular entertainment districts, estimates for attendance its inaugural year were between 100,000 to 300,000 people. Over a year later, a meager 33,000 have actually visited.¹³ In October 2004, the

museum announced plans to close all exhibits as of April 18, 2005 and keep the building open only for school groups (by appointment), users of the Society's library, and special event rentals while the staff undergoes an extensive planning process.¹⁴ Although speculations for the museum's lack of visitation are many, Blake Gopnik, a *Washington Post* staff writer, has suggested that the museum lacks the arresting artifacts that attract the public. His observation is based on attendance of the City Museum and another recently opened institution, the Smithsonian Institution's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, a branch of the National Air and Space Museum at Dulles Airport; the latter has drawn 1.3 million visitors in its first eight months. According to Gopnik:

I don't think this is just an issue of subject matter. Some people may find airplanes and spaceships an obvious draw compared with history and urban space. But as a former historian, obsessive cityphile and relative newcomer to Washington—and an artsy aesthete rather than a techno-jock—my first impulse was just the reverse: I rushed to visit the City Museum when it opened; I got to Udvar-Hazy only last week. Yet for all my peculiar biases, I still agree with the average Joes who have been voting with their feet. I would head back out to see those planes tomorrow—and the next day, and the next. I have no immediate plans to go back to the City Museum, or to push it on family or friends who visit. . . .

Udvar-Hazy understands that museums are, first and foremost, about fascinating objects.¹⁵

Gopnik notes that the objects on display at the City Museum include "A handful of ancient pots and pans, a couple of neat fireman's helmets, vintage photographs," which on their own do not usually generate the same emotions as massive feats of flight technology. The author does not describe what he learned during either visit, but his article implies that the interest created by the objects were the motivating factor in any learning experiences he had. The City Museum is "a carefully thought-through exercise in storytelling, with acres of pedagogic texts and high-design graphics," in other words, an idea-based exhibit, and most likely one influenced by the new social history.¹⁶

These examples may suggest that social history has less of an audience than traditional celebratory approaches, although other factors were involved in these situations. The Richmond and Baltimore projects were believed to have the power to draw major tourist dollars, but neither city is a “destination” in the pure sense, particularly since they compete with the tourism giants of Washington, D. C. (itself hurt by the drop in tourism following September 11, 2001) and Colonial Williamsburg. In the current service-driven economy, tourism has become the approach many cities and towns take after other industries have gone bankrupt or relocated. Competition for visitors has increased due to the construction of new attractions unrelated to heritage and the extensive growth in the number of museums in general. Steven Weil, a regular commentator on museum policies, has suggested that a “box office” mentality has influenced recent visitor-driven activities. According to Weil,

museums almost everywhere have, in essence, shifted from a ‘selling’ mode to a ‘marketing’ one. In the selling mode, their efforts had concentrated on convincing the public to ‘buy’ their traditional offerings. In the marketing mode, their starting point instead is the public’s own needs and interests, and their efforts are concentrated on first trying to discover and then attempting to satisfy those public needs and interests.¹⁷

The solution to this conundrum is elusive, which may be one reason Handler and Gable do not make any concrete suggestions about how to minimize the obsession with the bottom line and yet stay financially stable. I would suggest, however, that museums often underestimate their audiences. The popularity of Conner Prairie’s Underground Railroad program “Follow the North Star” and the frequent comment made by my survey respondents that visitors are interested in the “other side” of historic houses show that visitors do seek out more challenging ways of learning history. The stories that are most

difficult to tell require courage, commitments of support, and creative use of available historical materials.

Strong, confident leadership is central to offering interpretation of difficult subjects or those that are potentially controversial. Martin Harwit, the director of the National Air and Space Museum, and curators Tom Crouch and Michael Neufeld took firm stands in the defense of the interpretive exhibit that was to accompany the *Enola Gay*, but the Secretary of the Smithsonian, Lawrence Small, ultimately dealt the final blow to the exhibit. He took charge after the exhibition was underway and had only been in the position a short time when the controversy reached its peak. Instead of standing up for the curators and historians that created the exhibition, as it initially appeared he would, Small scrapped the project completely. Reflecting on the lessons of the *Enola Gay* debacle, historian and curator Otto Mayr called the incident “a disaster of leadership.”¹⁸

The exhibit’s lack of “balance” and “objectivity” were key criticisms made by its opponents; Small missed the opportunity to teach the American public that a museum exhibition that is balanced is does not have to be a bland recitation of “facts” that lacks an opinion. As Pamela Walker Laird argued in “The Challenge of Exhibiting Historical Advertisements,”

In the end, curators are accountable for their exhibitions. The key is not to minimize debate by resort to authority, to ‘get it right,’ but to acknowledge differences, indeed to savor them. Curators can vividly expose public and professional audiences to their studied interpretations as they exhibit material history. But unless they recognize and acknowledge the political nature of their displays, however many experts they consult, they are denying a profound responsibility.

Those higher up on the organizational ladder have it in their best interests to work with their curators to provide Americans with such critical opportunities to understand a different definition of “balance,” one that embraces multiple perspectives and discussions they promote.

On the “front lines” at historic sites and house museums, interpreters must be confident to do their jobs well, especially when they must address potentially controversial issues. They have to trust that they have the support of the institution’s leaders. The ability to successfully present intellectually challenging programs that address the roles of race, ethnicity, class, and gender requires commitment and trust at all levels of institutions. This can’t be the responsibility of just one guide, one mid-level staff member, or one director or board member.

An institution-wide dedication to telling the stories of people who are not well-represented in collections of material culture is particularly critical. Blake Gopnik’s experiences at the two newly opened Washington D. C. museums illustrate how important the physical object is to many visitors—and not just any physical object—but one that evokes wonder and imagination. His response may be discouraging at the outset, but his observations actually support the importance of historic house museums in bringing the stories of women, African Americans, and immigrants to the public. A historic house typically is a place that evokes an emotional response in visitors, whether it be awe or nostalgia (Gopnik himself notes that the City Museums’ restored building was “the only truly wondrous object that it has on show”). These historic buildings, grounded by the common experience of “home” and enhanced by the emotions visitors bring with them, can provide sophisticated and “balanced” historical narratives when

their interpreters are sensitive to the perspectives of those who experienced them as homes and workplaces where all manner of emotions and activities were experienced. Given the complex relationships that museums have had with the authentic objects they interpret and audiences that are increasingly diverse, the commitment to such programming will not happen evenly or overnight. But it has begun.

Notes

¹ In his book *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong*, James Loewen outlines the history of the logs that became known as those of Lincoln's birthplace cabin. James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York: The New Press, 1999), 166-169.

² The Illinois' Old State Capitol in Springfield, designed by the same architect, was a model for the restoration of the Iowa building. However, the Illinois capitol has a "feel" that seems much closer to how it might have been experienced in the early nineteenth century. The lighting is much dimmer, so the rooms have a dark, almost "sooty" feel. Although the Iowa capitol is similar in its architecture and the material culture selected for display, the experience physical experience of the interiors is quite different.

³ For examples, see Hal K. Rothman, "Museums and Academics: Thoughts Toward an Ethic of Cooperation" *Journal of American Culture* 12 (Summer 1989): 35-41; Douglas Greenberg, "'History is a Luxury': Mrs. Thatcher, Mr. Disney, and (Public) History" *Reviews in American History* 26, no. 1 (1998): 294-311.

⁴ John D. Krugler, "Behind the Public Presentations: Research and Scholarship at Living History Museums of Early America" *The William and Mary Quarterly* (1991): 354.

⁵ For several years the Strong Museum in Rochester, New York had an excellent resolution to this conflict by creating well-respected scholarly companion volumes for its exhibitions. However, few history museums have the budgets and staffs to take on such projects. Warren Leon, "The Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum: A Review" *American Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (September 1989), 538.

⁶ Hilde S. Hein, *The Museum in Transition: A Philosophical Perspective* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 8.

⁷ Bethany Watkins Sugawara, "But They're Not Real! Rethinking the Use of Props in Historic House Museum Displays" *History News* 58 (Autumn 2003), 20-23.

⁸ The promotional brochure encourages its readers to "Live some history with this new overnight immersion experience. Wake up in 1886 and learn firsthand about rural life more than a century ago. There's plenty of work to do on a farm, from preparing meals and gardening to livestock care and working in the fields. Listen for the school bell to summon you for daily lessons or relax and have some fun later on with pastimes such as parlor games or historic base ball. Both adults and children will enjoy this unforgettable experience!" Conner Prairie promotional piece, nd.

⁹ Krugler, 356-357.

¹⁰ In his review of the Valentine's exhibition "The Working People of Richmond: Life and Labor in an Industrial City," Randall M. Miller noted that "The 'new social history' has invaded the once staid citadel of southern gentility to discover working people, ethnic diversity, racial strife, and an industrial experience much attuned to the clangs of 'progress' heard in northeastern cities but rarely associated with southern ones;" *The Public Historian* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 120.

¹¹ Andrew Reiner, "The Case for Culture: Why City Life Museums Deserves Our Support," *Baltimore Chronicle*, 6 February 1997, <<http://www.baltimorechronicle.com/citylife.html>> (27 June 2004).

¹² Linda Shopes, "Oral History and Community Involvement: The Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project," in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, ed. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 249-263.

¹³ Jacqueline Trescott, "City Museum on Shaky Ground; After 14 Months, Visitors and Cash Are in Short Supply," *Washington Post*, 27 July 2004, A01.

¹⁴ Matthew Gilmore, "City Museum news—update on status," 8 October 2004, <dc-ed@MAIL.H-NET.MSU.EDU> (14 October 2004).

¹⁵ Blake Gopnik, "Object Lessons; One Museum Soars, One Plods. Both Want to Open Minds, but the Former Knows Eyes Come First," *Washington Post*, 8 August 2004, NO1.

¹⁶ Barbara Franco, "What's New in Exhibits?" *Cultural Resource Management* 23, no. 5 (2000): 46-48.

¹⁷ Stephen E. Weil, "From Being about Something to Being for Somebody: The Ongoing Transformation of the American Museum" *Dædalus* 128, no. 3 (Summer 1999), 232-233.

¹⁸ Otto Mayr, "The Enola Gay Fiasco: History, Politics, and the Museum" *Technology and Culture* 39, no. 3 (1998): 473.

APPENDIX A. TABLES

Table A-1. Distribution, by race and nativity, of women 16 years of age and over employed as servants and waitresses for states and territories: 1900. *Statistics of Women at Work*, table xxviii.

State or Territory	Women 16 years of age and over employed as servants and waitresses								
	All classes	Number				Percent			
		Native white		Foreign born white	Negro, Indian, and Mongolian	Native white		Foreign born white	Negro, Indian, and Mongolian
		Both parents native	One or both parents foreign born			Both parents native	One or both parents foreign born		
Continental United States	1,165,561	305,883	223,327	322,062	314,289	26.2	19.2	27.6	27.0
North Atlantic Division	446,342	110,350	77,522	211,867	46,603	24.7	17.4	47.5	10.4
New England	118,569	24,664	17,676	69,918	6,311	20.8	14.9	59.0	5.3
Maine.....	10,832	6,008	1,535	3,191	98	55.5	14.2	29.5	0.9
New Hampshire.....	6,735	3,046	1,049	2,532	108	45.2	15.6	37.6	1.6
Vermont.....	6,054	3,224	1,610	1,152	68	53.3	26.6	19.0	1.1
Massachusetts.....	68,701	8,562	9,522	47,399	3,218	12.5	13.9	69.0	4.7
Rhode Island.....	8,146	996	1,005	5,185	960	12.2	12.3	63.7	11.8
Connecticut.....	18,101	2,828	2,955	10,459	1,859	15.6	16.3	57.8	10.3

Table A-1. continued

Southern North Atlantic	327,773	85,686	59,846	141,949	40,292	26.1	18.3	43.3	12.3
New York.....	174,289	31,938	34,180	93,488	14,683	18.3	19.6	53.6	8.4
New Jersey.....	38,478	6,469	6,125	17,240	8,644	16.8	15.9	44.8	22.5
Pennsylvania.....	115,006	47,279	19,541	31,221	16,965	41.1	17.0	27.1	14.8
South Atlantic Division	161,379	27,598	3,107	4,116	126,558	17.1	1.9	2.6	78.4
Northern South Atlantic	91,133	18,907	2,965	3,912	65,349	20.7	3.3	4.3	71.7
Delaware.....	4,024	814	226	492	2,492	20.2	5.6	12.2	61.9
Maryland.....	28,945	5,527	1,792	2,359	19,267	19.1	6.2	8.1	66.6
District of Columbia.....	14,694	1,021	362	744	12,567	6.9	2.5	5.1	85.5
Virginia.....	35,204	5,579	92	130	29,403	15.8	0.3	0.4	83.5
West Virginia.....	8,266	5,966	483	187	1,620	72.2	6.0	2.3	19.5
Southern South Atlantic	70,246	8,691	142	204	61,209	12.4	0.2	0.3	87.1
North Carolina.....	21,395	5,114	19	27	16,235	23.9	0.1	0.1	75.9
South Carolina.....	14,210	853	26	51	13,280	6.0	0.2	0.4	93.5
Georgia.....	29,032	2,163	53	60	26,756	7.5	0.2	0.2	92.2
Florida.....	5,609	561	44	66	4,938	10.0	0.8	1.2	88.0

Table A-1. continued

North Central Division	366,202	126,527	125,598	87,168	26,909	34.6	34.3	23.8	7.3
Eastern North Central	235,896	85,635	78,275	57,785	14,201	36.3	33.2	24.5	6.0
Ohio.....	60,953	29,399	16,700	9,850	5,004	48.2	27.4	16.2	8.2
Indiana.....	29,889	19,003	5,553	1,864	3,469	63.6	18.6	6.2	11.6
Illinois.....	74,919	20,761	22,369	27,157	4,632	27.7	29.9	36.2	6.2
Michigan.....	36,542	10,994	13,641	10,994	913	30.1	37.3	30.1	2.5
Wisconsin.....	33,593	5,478	20,012	7,920	183	16.3	59.6	23.6	0.5
Western North Central	130,306	40,892	47,323	29,383	12,708	31.4	36.3	22.5	9.8
Minnesota.....	31,648	3,334	16,343	11,643	328	10.5	51.6	36.8	1.0
Iowa.....	26,588	10,101	10,873	5,143	471	38.0	40.9	19.3	1.8
Missouri.....	38,670	15,792	8,980	4,267	9,631	40.8	23.2	11.0	24.9
North Dakota.....	5,275	633	1,974	2,648	20	12.0	37.4	50.2	0.4
South Dakota.....	4,457	1,003	2,069	1,347	38	22.5	46.4	30.2	0.9
Nebraska.....	11,818	3,997	4,276	3,070	475	33.8	36.2	26.0	4.0

Table A-1. continued

Kansas.....	11,850	6,032	2,808	1,265	1,745	50.9	23.7	10.7	14.7
South Central division	148,169	27,436	5,119	3,791	111,823	18.5	3.5	2.6	75.5
Eastern South Central	92,547	17,045	2,034	1,053	72,415	18.4	2.2	1.1	78.2
Kentucky.....	29,422	8,594	1,676	808	18,344	29.2	5.7	2.7	62.3
Tennessee.....	27,466	5,831	206	140	21,289	21.2	0.8	0.5	77.5
Alabama.....	19,979	1,719	103	78	18,079	8.6	0.5	0.4	90.5
Mississippi.....	15,680	901	49	27	14,703	5.7	0.3	0.2	93.8
Western South Central	55,622	10,391	3,085	2,738	39,408	18.7	5.5	4.9	70.8
Louisiana.....	19,691	1,924	1,099	612	16,056	9.8	5.6	3.1	81.5
Arkansas.....	9,748	2,953	214	129	6,452	30.3	2.2	1.3	66.2
Indian Territory.....	2,031	1,146	51	17	817	56.4	2.5	0.8	40.2
Oklahoma.....	1,866	1,158	205	97	406	62.1	11.0	5.2	21.8
Texas.....	22,286	3,210	1,516	1,883	15,677	14.4	6.8	8.4	70.3
Western division	43,469	13,972	11,981	15,120	2,396	32.1	27.6	34.8	5.5

Table A-1. continued

Rocky Mountains	12,442	4,414	3,118	3,978	932	35.5	25.1	32.0	7.5
Montana.....	2,922	716	865	1,247	94	24.3	29.6	42.7	3.2
Idaho.....	945	418	316	194	17	44.2	33.4	20.5	1.8
Wyoming.....	767	312	241	195	19	40.7	31.4	25.4	2.5
Colorado.....	6,886	2,343	1,583	2,238	722	34.0	23.0	32.5	10.5
New Mexico.....	922	625	113	104	80	67.8	12.3	11.3	8.7
Basin and Plateau	3,353	729	1,333	1,007	284	21.7	39.8	30.0	8.5
Arizona.....	543	164	112	154	113	30.2	20.6	28.4	20.8
Utah.....	2,420	464	1,114	800	42	19.2	46.0	33.1	1.7
Nevada.....	390	101	107	53	129	25.9	27.4	13.6	33.1
Pacific	27,674	8,829	7,530	10,135	1,180	31.9	27.2	36.6	4.3
Washington.....	4,776	1,919	1,171	1,535	151	40.2	24.5	32.1	3.2
Oregon.....	4,182	2,087	1,054	904	137	49.9	25.2	21.6	3.3
California.....	18,716	4,823	5,305	7,696	892	25.8	28.3	41.1	4.8

Table A-2. Response rates according to state and region.

<i>Region/State</i>	<i>Number mailed</i>	<i>Number returned</i>	<i>Percentage returned</i>
New England			
Connecticut	23	14	60.9
Maine	13	8	61.5
Massachusetts	32	16	50.0
New Hampshire	15	7	46.7
Rhode Island	6	6	100.0
Vermont	3	1	33.3
Region Total	92	52	56.5
Southern North Atlantic			
New Jersey	14	7	50.0
New York	39	19	51.3
Pennsylvania	25	13	52
Region Total	78	39	50.0
Northern South Atlantic			
Delaware	5	1	20.0
District of Columbia	6	4	66.7
Maryland	7	5	71.4
Virginia	8	4	50.0
West Virginia	1	1	100.0
Total Region	27	15	55.6
Southern South Atlantic			
Florida	19	8	42.1
Georgia	18	13	72.2
North Carolina	9	3	33.3
South Carolina	4	1	25.0
Region Total	50	25	50.0
Eastern North Central			
Illinois	32	19	59.4
Indiana	17	8	47.1
Michigan	23	10	43.5
Ohio	24	10	41.7
Wisconsin	20	12	60.0
Region Total	116	59	50.9
Western North Central			
Iowa	19	8	42.1
Kansas	15	7	46.7
Minnesota	15	12	80.0
Missouri	22	8	36.4
Nebraska	10	8	80.0
North Dakota	5	2	40.0
South Dakota	7	4	57.1
Region Total	93	49	52.7

Table A-2. Continued

	Number mailed	Number returned	Percentage returned
Eastern South Central			
Alabama	20	7	35.0
Kentucky	8	3	37.5
Mississippi	7	2	28.6
Tennessee	4	1	25.0
Region Total	39	13	33.3
Western South Central			
Arkansas	10	7	70.0
Louisiana	4	3	75.0
Oklahoma	13	6	46.2
Texas	29	14	48.3
Region Total	56	30	53.6
Rocky Mountain			
Colorado	16	7	43.8
Idaho	2	1	50.0
Montana	8	4	50.0
Wyoming	4	3	75.0
Region Total	30	15	50.0
Basin and Plateau			
Arizona	11	6	54.5
Utah	1	1	100.0
Region Total	12	7	58.3
Pacific			
California	71	39	54.9
Oregon	10	6	60.0
Washington	8	5	62.5
Region Total	89	50	56.1
Non-contiguous			
Hawaii	6	3	50.0
Alaska	3	1	33.3
Region Total	9	4	44.4
Grand Total	691	358	51.8

Table A-3. Types of servants present at respondents' sites.

	New England	Southern N. Atlantic	Northern S. Atlantic	Southern S. Atlantic	Eastern N. Central	Western N. Central	Eastern S. Central	Western S. Central	Rocky Mountains	Basin and Plateau	Pacific	Total
Butler	13	12	6	6	15	7	3	7	3	0	6	78
Head Housekeeper	11	10	4	8	11	11	2	5	6	1	11	80
Parlor maid	6	8	1	3	8	3	1	2	2	0	1	35
Chamber maid	6	13	4	3	8	5	3	2	2	1	3	50
Chef	7	5	1	3	2	2	0	1	1	1	3	26
Cook	23	20	6	11	24	20	6	10	9	2	26	157
Kitchen maid	9	15	3	4	12	15	2	6	3	1	3	73
Scullery maid	4	8	0	4	3	2	1	0	0	0	1	23
Children's nurse	5	9	2	3	9	6	4	3	3	0	7	51
Governess	4	7	2	2	9	6	2	2	2	1	5	42
Footman	6	4	1	3	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	21
Chauffeur	17	12	5	4	15	9	2	7	4	1	14	90
Head gardener	14	18	6	6	21	16	3	7	1	0	16	108
Maid of all work	17	14	1	8	20	18	4	8	3	1	14	108
Lady's maid	9	11	1	4	7	6	2	1	0	0	2	43
Other	17	15	4	8	20	10	4	6	7	0	17	108
Some unknown	1	3	0	4	2	1	1	3	2	1	3	21
All unknown	3	4	2	1	5	3	3	1	0	0	1	23
Total	172	188	49	85	195	141	44	71	48	10	133	1136

Table A-4. Ethnicities of servants by region.

	<i>New England</i>	<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	<i>Western N. Central</i>	<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	<i>Western S. Central</i>	<i>Rocky Mt.</i>	<i>Basin, Plateau</i>	<i>Pacific</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Native-born white</i>	19	12	4	6	14	12	3	1	3	1	11	86
<i>African-American</i>	7	13	11	16	8	9	10	12	3	1	5	95
<i>Austrian</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
<i>Bohemian/Czech</i>	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
<i>Canadian (English)</i>	0	1	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
<i>Canadian (French)</i>	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
<i>Danish</i>	1	2	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	9
<i>English</i>	7	8	3	0	7	4	0	1	0	0	3	33
<i>French</i>	5	3	1	3	4	2	1	0	0	0	3	22
<i>German</i>	3	7	1	2	6	12	1	1	4	0	4	41
<i>Hungarian</i>	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	6
<i>Irish</i>	17	16	5	0	14	6	2	2	3	1	4	70
<i>Italian</i>	2	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	9
<i>Norwegian</i>	1	2	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	1	14
<i>Polish</i>	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	5
<i>Russian</i>	0	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	5	11
<i>Scottish</i>	5	4	0	1	5	1	1	1	2	1	3	24
<i>Swedish</i>	1	3	0	2	9	9	0	0	4	0	2	30
<i>Swiss</i>	5	5	0	0	2	2	1	0	2	0	1	18
<i>Native-born foreign parentage</i>	0	3	1	0	5	3	1	1	1	0	3	18
<i>Other ethnicities</i>	7	1	0	2	3	3	0	3	5	2	26	52
<i>Some unknown</i>	3	4	3	2	9	10	0	2	3	2	4	42
<i>All unknown</i>	4	2	0	1	4	2	1	1	1	0	3	19
<i>No answer</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
<i>Total</i>	94	91	31	37	107	90	21	26	33	8	82	620

Table A-5. Responses to Questions #1 (Were servants present at your site during the interpretive period?) and #6 (Is information about the domestic servants part of your site's standard tour?).

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number of Sites</i>	<i>Total sites without domestic servants</i>	<i>Total sites with domestic servants</i>	<i>Number of sites not interpreting domestic servants</i>	<i>Number of sites interpreting domestic service</i>	<i>Percentage of sites interpreting domestic service</i>
<i>New England</i>	47	7	40	7	33	82.5
<i>Southern North Atlantic</i>	36	7	29	4	25	86.2
<i>Northern South Atlantic</i>	13	1	12	3	9	75.8
<i>Southern South Atlantic</i>	21	2	19	4	15	78.9
<i>Eastern North Central</i>	57	12	45	12	33	69.6
<i>Western North Central</i>	46	9	37	14	23	62.2
<i>Eastern South Central</i>	12	2	10	4	6	60.0
<i>Western South Central</i>	23	8	15	7	8	53.3
<i>Rocky Mountain</i>	14	3	11	2	9	81.8
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	7	3	4	3	1	25.0
<i>Pacific</i>	47	8	39	10	29	76.3
<i>Non-contiguous</i>	4	3	1	1	0	0.0
Total	327	65	262	71	191	72.9

Table A-6. Responses to question #8: Are service areas (kitchen, servants' hall, servants' bedrooms) part of the standard tour? Are they period rooms?

<i>Region</i>	<i>Servant Rooms on tour</i>	<i>Period rooms</i>	<i>Not period rooms</i>	<i>No answer</i>	<i>No servant rooms on tour</i>	<i>Total</i>
New England	27	22	4	1	6	33
Southern North Atlantic	20	16	4	0	5	25
Northern South Atlantic	7	5	2	0	2	9
Southern South Atlantic	13	9	4	0	2	15
Eastern North Central	32	22	8	2	1	33
Western North Central	20	16	3	1	3	23
Eastern South Central	3	3	0	0	3	6
Western South Central	5	3	1	1	3	8
Rocky Mountains Basin and Plateau	9	8	1	0	0	9
Pacific	1	1	0	0	0	1
Pacific	25	19	6	0	4	29
Total	162 (84.8%)	124 (76.5%)	33 (20.4%)	5 (3.1%)	29 (15.2%)	191

Table A-7. Responses to question #9. May visitors tour support buildings used by servants?

<i>Region</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>	<i>No answer</i>	<i>Total Responses</i>
<i>New England</i>	8 (24.2%)	13 (39.4%)	12 (36.4%)	0	33
<i>Southern North Atlantic</i>	11 (44.0)	4 (16.0)	10 (40.0)	0	25
<i>Northern South Atlantic</i>	2 (22.2)	2 (22.2)	5 (55.6)	0	9
<i>Southern South Atlantic</i>	6 (40.0)	3 (20.0)	6 (60.0)	0	15
<i>Eastern North Central</i>	8 (24.2)	9 (27.3)	15 (45.5)	1 (3.0)	33
<i>Western North Central</i>	7 (30.4)	5 (21.7)	11 (47.8)	0	23
<i>Eastern South Central</i>	2 (33.3)	0	4 (66.7)	0	6
<i>Western South Central</i>	4 (50.0)	2 (25.0)	2 (25.0)	0	8
<i>Rocky Mountain</i>	5 (55.6)	1 (11.1)	4 (33.3)	0	9
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	0	0	1 (100.0)	0	1
<i>Pacific</i>	12 (41.4)	5 (17.2)	12 (41.4)	0	29
Total	65 (34.0)	44 (23.0)	81 (42.4)	1 (.5)	191

Table A-8. Responses to survey question #10: Does your site have artifact collections relevant to servants who worked there?

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number with artifact collections</i>	<i>Number without artifact collections</i>	<i>No answer</i>	<i>Total sites responding</i>
<i>New England</i>	19 (57.6%)	12 (36.4%)	2 (6.0%)	33
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	15 (60.0)	10 (40.0)	0	25
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	5 (55.6)	4 (44.4)	0	9
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	11 (73.3)	4 (26.7)	0	15
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	22 (66.7)	10 (30.3)	1 (3.0)	33
<i>Western N. Central</i>	10 (43.5)	12 (52.2)	1 (4.3)	23
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	5 (83.3)	1 (16.7)	0	6
<i>Western S. Central</i>	2 (25.0)	6 (75.0)	0	8
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	6 (66.7)	3 (33.3)	0	9
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1 (100.0)	0	0	1
<i>Pacific</i>	19 (65.5)	10 (34.5)	0	29
<i>Total</i>	115 (60.2)	72 (37.7)	4 (2.1)	191

Table A-9. Responses to survey question # 11: Does your site have archival collections relevant to servants who worked there?

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number with archival collections</i>	<i>Number without archival collections</i>	<i>No answer</i>	<i>Total sites responding</i>
<i>New England</i>	18 (54.5%)	13 (39.4%)	2 (6.0%)	32
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	13 (52.0)	12(48.0)	0	25
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	7 (77.8)	2 (22.2)	0	9
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	8 (53.3)	7 (46.7)	0	15
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	19 (57.6)	12 (36.4)	2 (6.1)	33
<i>Western N. Central</i>	10 (43.5)	13 (56.5)	0	23
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	1 (16.7)	5 (83.3)	0	6
<i>Western S. Central</i>	5 (62.5)	3 (37.5)	0	8
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	4 (44.4)	5 (55.6)	0	9
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1 (100.0)	0	0	1
<i>Pacific</i>	14 (48.3)	15 (51.7)	0	29
<i>Total</i>	100 (52.4)	87 (45.5)	4 (2.1)	191

Table A-10. Responses to survey question # 12: Has your staff conducted off-site research about the site's servants?

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number that have conducted off-site research</i>	<i>Number that have not conducted off-site research</i>	<i>No answer</i>	<i>Total sites responding</i>
<i>New England</i>	15 (45.5)	18 (54.5)	0	33
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	16 (64.0)	9 (36.0)	0	25
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	5 (55.6)	4 (44.4)	0	9
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	10 (66.7)	5 (33.3)	0	15
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	24 (72.7)	8 (24.2)	1 (3.1)	33
<i>Western N. Central</i>	10 (43.5)	13 (56.5)	0	23
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	4 (66.7)	2 (33.3)	0	6
<i>Western S. Central</i>	3 (37.5)	5 (62.5)	0	8
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	5 (55.6)	4 (44.4)	0	9
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1 (100.0)	0	0	1
<i>Pacific</i>	15 (51.7)	13 (44.8)	1 (3.4)	29
<i>Total</i>	108 (56.5)	81 (42.4)	2 (1.0)	191

Table A-11. Responses to question #13: Does your site include information about domestic service in its tours that is **not** site-specific?

<i>Region</i>	<i>Use non-site-specific information</i>	<i>Do not use non-site-specific information</i>	<i>No Answer</i>	<i>Total sites responding</i>
<i>New England</i>	15 (45.5%)	18 (54.5%)	0	33
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	15 (60.0)	8 (32.0)	2 (8.0)	25
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	7 (77.8)	2 (22.2)	0	9
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	7 (46.7)	8 (53.3)	0	15
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	21 (63.6)	11 (33.3)	1 (3.0)	33
<i>Western N. Central</i>	11 (47.8)	10 (43.5)	2 (8.7)	23
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	4 (66.7)	2 (33.3)	0	6
<i>Western S. Central</i>	3 (37.5)	5 (62.5)	0	8
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	5 (55.6)	4 (44.4)	0	9
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	0	1 (100.0)	0	1
<i>Pacific</i>	5 (17.2)	24 (82.8)	0	29
<i>Total</i>	93 (48.7)	93(48.7)	5 (2.6)	191

Table A-12. Responses to question #13a: If yes, which of the following have been the most significant sources?

<i>Region</i>	<i>Total sites responding</i>	<i>Histories of domestic service</i>	<i>Period etiquette & household manuals</i>	<i>Period magazines</i>	<i>Regional history collections</i>	<i>Period newspapers</i>
<i>New England</i>	15	9	7	1	6	5
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	15	8	12	5	2	2
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	7	6	6	1	1	3
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	7	4	2	2	4	2
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	21	16	14	6	7	7
<i>Western N. Central</i>	11	8	6	0	4	3
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	4	4	1	1	2	2
<i>Western S. Central</i>	3	1	1	0	0	1
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	5	4	3	2	1	1
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Pacific</i>	5	3	4	2	2	2
<i>Total</i>	93	63	42	20	29	28

Table A-13. Response to question #13b: Which statement best describes your site's use of general sources?

<i>Region</i>	<i>Total sites responding</i>	<i>Primary resources for interpreting servants</i>	<i>Use them to supplement what we know about actual servants</i>	<i>Use them sparingly</i>	<i>No Answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	15	2.5	10.5	2	0
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	15	3	11	1	0
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	7	2	4	1	0
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	7	1	5	1	0
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	21	7.5	12.5	1	0
<i>Western N. Central</i>	11	2	6	3	0
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	4	0	2	1	1
<i>Western S. Central</i>	3	0	2	0	1
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	5	0	4	1	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Pacific</i>	5	0	4	1	0
<i>Total</i>	93	18 (19.4%)	61 (65.6%)	12 (12.9%)	2 (2.2%)

Table A-14. Ranking of question #14: Difficulty of servants' work.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Sites responding</i>	<i>5-Very significant</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1-Not significant</i>	<i>No answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	33	3	4	8	3	12	3
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	25	5	4	7	2	5	2
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	9	0	3	3	2	0	1
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	15	0	4	4	2	4	1
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	33	4	8	8	5	6	2
<i>Western N. Central</i>	23	1	5	8	3	4	2
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	6	0	1	1	1	3	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	8	0	1	2	1	3	1
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	9	2	2	1	2	2	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Pacific</i>	29	1	6	3	7	6	6
<i>Total</i>	191	16 (8.4%)	38 (19.9%)	45 (23.6%)	27 (14.1%)	46 (24.1%)	18 (9.4%)

Table A-15. Ranking of question # 15: Use of domestic appliances and technology.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Sites responding</i>	<i>5-Very significant</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1-Not significant</i>	<i>No answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	33	5	6	7	8	6	1
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	25	6	4	6	4	4	1
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	9	2	1	2	1	2	1
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	15	3	3	4	1	3	1
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	33	8	4	8	6	6	1
<i>Western N. Central</i>	23	7	6	3	3	2	2
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	6	0	1	1	2	2	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	8	1	0	1	3	2	1
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	9	2	3	4	0	0	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Pacific</i>	29	1	4	11	5	5	3
Total	191	35 (18.3%)	32 (16.8%)	47 (24.6%)	33 (17.3%)	33 (17.3%)	11 (5.8%)

Table A-16. Rating of question #16: Ethnic backgrounds of servants.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Sites responding</i>	<i>5-Very significant</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1-Not significant</i>	<i>No answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	33	3	3	6	8	12	1
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	25	3	4	5	6	6	1
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	9	1	2	4	0	1	1
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	15	3	2	1	3	5	1
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	33	4	4	5	7	11	2
<i>Western N. Central</i>	23	2	4	4	4	7	2
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	6	1	3	0	1	1	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	8	1	3	1	2	0	1
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	9	0	0	3	1	5	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Pacific</i>	29	5	7	7	3	6	1
Total	191	23 (12.0%)	32 (16.8%)	36 (18.8%)	35 (18.3%)	55 (28.8%)	10 (5.2%)

Table A-17. Responses to question # 17: Working conditions of servants.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Sites responding</i>	<i>5-Very significant</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1-Not significant</i>	<i>No answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	33	1	6	6	11	7	2
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	25	5	4	10	2	3	1
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	9	0	1	5	2	0	1
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	15	2	5	4	1	3	0
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	33	4	11	7	3	7	1
<i>Western N. Central</i>	23	2	6	4.5	4.5	4	2
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	6	0	2	0	2	2	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	8	1	3	1	1	1	1
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	9	0	0	5	3	1	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Pacific</i>	29	3	6	8	7	3	2
Total	191	18 (9.4%)	44 (23.0%)	50.5 (26.4%)	36.5 (19.1%)	32 (16.8%)	10 (5.2%)

Table A-18. Responses to question #18: Living conditions of servants.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Sites responding</i>	<i>5-Very significant</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1-Not significant</i>	<i>No answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	33	2	10	4	7	9	1
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	25	5	6	9	1	3	1
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	9	0	1	5	1	0	2
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	15	3	3	3	2	4	0
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	33	3	11	8	8	3	0
<i>Western N. Central</i>	23	4.5	6	4	2.5	3	3
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	6	1	1	0	3	1	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	8	2	2	0	2	1	1
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	9	1	1	4	1	2	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Pacific</i>	29	3	6	9	6	4	1
Total	191	24.5 (12.8%)	47 (24.6%)	46 (24.1%)	33.5 (17.5%)	31 (16.2%)	9 (4.7%)

Table A-19. Responses to question #19: Social stigma of domestic service.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Sites responding</i>	<i>5-Very significant</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1-Not significant</i>	<i>No answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	33	0	0	6	8	17	2
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	25	2	2	5	4	9	3
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	9	0	2	0	3	3	1
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	15	0	0	4	2	8	1
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	33	1	1	8	3	19	1
<i>Western N. Central</i>	23	0	3	8	3	7	2
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	6	0	0	2	1	3	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	8	0	1	2	1	3	1
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	9	1	0	1	0	7	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Pacific</i>	29	1	1	6	7	10	4
<i>Total</i>	191	5 (2.6%)	10 (5.2%)	42 (22.0%)	32 (16.8%)	87 (45.5%)	15 (7.8%)

Table A-20. Ranking of question #20: Friendship between servants and employees.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Sites responding</i>	<i>5-Very significant</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1-Not significant</i>	<i>No answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	33	4	9	7	5	7	1
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	25	2.5	8.5	3	7	2	2
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	9	0	1	5	0	2	1
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	15	4	0	3	1	6	1
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	33	6	6	10	3	7	1
<i>Western N. Central</i>	23	1	0	11	5	3	3
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	6	1	0	0	2	3	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	8	2.5	1.5	0	2	1	1
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	9	0	1	1	0	7	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Pacific</i>	29	2	5	9	3	9	1
Total	191	23 (28.8%)	32 (16.8%)	49 (25.7%)	28 (14.7%)	48 (25.1%)	11 (5.8%)

Table A-21. Ranking of question #21: Conflict between servants and employers.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Sites responding</i>	<i>5-Very significant</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1-Not significant</i>	<i>No answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	33	2	2	5	6	17	1
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	25	2	4	1	6	9	3
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	9	.5	.5	1	1	5	1
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	15	2	1	1	2	7	2
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	33	2	1	4	9	15	2
<i>Western N. Central</i>	23	0	0	5	5	11	2
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	6	0	0	0	1	5	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	8	0	1	1	2	3	1
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	9	0	0	1	2	6	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Pacific</i>	29	1	2	3	7	13	3
Total	191	9.5 (5.0%)	11.5 (6.0%)	22 (11.5%)	41 (21.5%)	92 (48.2%)	15 (7.9%)

Table A-22. Ranking of question #22: Ethnic or racial prejudices of the era.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Sites responding</i>	<i>5-Very significant</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1-Not significant</i>	<i>No answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	33	1	1	5.5	4.5	19	2
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	25	3	3	7	4	6	2
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	9	1	2	0	2	3	1
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	15	2	2	3	2	4	2
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	33	0	0	5	5	21	2
<i>Western N. Central</i>	23	1	2	0	7	11	2
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	6	2	1	0	2	1	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	8	1	1	2	1	2	1
<i>Rocky Mountains Basin and Plateau</i>	9	0	0	1	2	8	0
<i>Pacific</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Pacific</i>	29	2	6	5	5	9	2
<i>Total</i>	191	13 (6.8%)	18 (9.4%)	28.5 (14.9%)	34.5 (17.0%)	85 (44.5%)	14 (7.3%)

Table A-23. Ranking of question #23: Gender of domestic servants.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Sites responding</i>	<i>5-Very significant</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1-Not significant</i>	<i>No answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	33	1	3	9	7	10	3
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	25	6	3	5	6	3	2
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	9	0	1	2	2	3	1
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	15	2	0	5	0	7	1
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	33	2	7	10	2	10	2
<i>Western N. Central</i>	23	0	3	5	7	6	2
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	6	1	1	2	0	2	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	8	1	0	2	2	2	1
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	9	2	1	1	2	3	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Pacific</i>	28	0	4	7	7	9	2
Total	191	15 (7.9%)	23 (12.0%)	48 (25.1%)	35 (18.3%)	56 (29.3%)	14 (7.3%)

Table A-24. Ranking of question #24: The "servant problem."

<i>Region</i>	<i>Sites responding</i>	<i>5-Very significant</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1-Not significant</i>	<i>No answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	33	3	1	4	3	20	2
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	25	0	0	6	3	12	4
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	9	0	0	3	1	4	1
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	15	1	0	2	1	10	1
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	33	1	0	6	8	16	2
<i>Western N. Central</i>	23	1	0	4	6	10	2
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	6	0	0	1	0	5	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	8	0	1	1	1	3	2
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	9	1	2	0	1	5	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Pacific</i>	29	1	1	2	9	13	3
Total	191	8 (4.2%)	5 (2.6%)	29 (15.2%)	33 (17.3%)	99 (51.8%)	17 (8.9%)

Table A-25. Ranking of question #25: Benefits of domestic service.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Sites responding</i>	<i>5-Very significant</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1-Not significant</i>	<i>No answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	33	1	3	7	3	17	2
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	25	2	2	7	5	8	1
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	9	0	0	3	1	3	2
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	15	1	2	4	1	7	0
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	33	3	5	9	3	9	4
<i>Western N. Central</i>	23	1	5	3	5	7	2
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	6	0	0	1	1	4	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	8	1	2	2	1	1	1
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	9	0	1	1	1	6	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Pacific</i>	29	0	4	8	2	13	2
<i>Total</i>	191	9 (4.7%)	24 (12.6%)	45 (23.6%)	23 (12.0%)	76 (39.8%)	14 (7.3%)

Table A-26. Ranking of question #26: Servants' uniforms.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Sites responding</i>	<i>5-Very significant</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1-Not significant</i>	<i>No answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	33	1	3	1	5	22	1
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	25	2	1	1	6	12	2
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	0	0	0	1	1	6	1
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	15	1	2	1	0	10	1
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	33	0	2	4	6	19	2
<i>Western N. Central</i>	23	0	1	4	3	13	2
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	6	0	0	0	1	5	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	8	0	0	1	3	3	1
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	9	0	1	2	0	6	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Pacific</i>	29	0	0	2	6	18	3
<i>Total</i>	191	5 (2.6%)	10 (5.2%)	17 (8.9%)	31 (16.2%)	115 (60.2%)	13 (6.8%)

Table A-27. Average rating of questions 14 through 26, by region.

<i>Region</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>New England</i>	2.4	2.88	2.28	2.45	2.66	1.65	2.94	1.94	1.73	2.27	1.84	1.97	1.63	2.20
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	3.1	3.17	2.54	3.25	3.38	2.27	3.11	2.27	2.7	3.13	2.0	2.37	1.78	2.70
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	3.1	3.0	3.25	2.88	3.0	2.13	2.63	1.81	2.5	2.13	1.88	2.0	1.22	2.43
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	2.86	3.14	2.64	3.13	3.07	1.71	2.64	2.31	2.69	2.29	1.64	2.27	1.86	2.48
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	2.97	3.06	2.45	3.06	3.09	1.81	3.03	1.90	1.48	2.65	1.97	2.66	1.65	2.44
<i>Western N. Central</i>	2.81	3.61	2.52	2.88	3.33	1.95	2.55	1.71	1.81	2.24	1.86	2.43	1.67	2.41
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	2.0	2.17	3.33	2.33	2.67	1.83	2.0	1.17	3.17	2.83	1.33	1.5	1.17	2.12
<i>Western S. Central</i>	2.1	2.86	3.4	3.29	3.29	2.14	3.36	2.0	2.71	2.43	2.0	3.14	1.71	2.69
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	3.0	3.78	1.78	2.44	2.78	1.67	1.56	1.44	1.22	2.67	2.22	1.67	1.78	2.15
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
<i>Pacific</i>	2.5	2.65	3.07	2.96	2.93	2.28	2.58	1.88	2.52	2.31	1.77	2.11	1.38	2.38
<i>Total</i>	2.53	2.88	2.57	2.7	2.84	1.86	2.49	1.77	2.14	2.36	1.77	2.10	1.53	2.18

Table A-28. Responses to question # 27: How would you describe the site's tour guides' reactions to interpreting domestic service?

<i>Region</i>	<i>Sites responding</i>	<i>Enthusiastic</i>	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Indifferent</i>	<i>Resistant</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	33	5	23	3	0	2	0
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	25	4.67	15	3.33	1	0	1
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	9	2	5	0	1	0	1
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	15	3.5	7.5	0	.5	3	1
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	33	5.5	20.5	5	0	2	0
<i>Western N. Central</i>	23	3.5	13	4.5	0	1	1
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	6	0	5	1	0	0	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	8	1	5.5	.5	.5	0	0
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	9	0	7.5	.5	0	1	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Pacific</i>	29	5	14	6	1	2	1
Total	191	30.17 (15.8%)	116 (60.7%)	23.83 (12.5%)	4 (2.1%)	12 (6.3%)	5 (2.6%)

Table A-29. Responses to question #28: How would you describe the visitors' reactions to hearing about domestic service?

<i>Region</i>	<i>Sites responding</i>	<i>Enthusiastic</i>	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Indifferent</i>	<i>Resistant</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	33	7	23	1	0	2	0
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	25	7	14	2	0	0	2
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	9	2	6	0	0	0	1
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	15	3.5	7.5	0	0	3	1
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	33	7.5	17.5	4	0	3	1
<i>Western N. Central</i>	23	4.5	13.5	4	0	0	1
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	6	0	5	1	0	0	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	8	1	4.5	.5	0	1	1
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	9	0	6.5	1.5	0	1	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Pacific</i>	29	3.33	19.33	2	0	3.33	1
Total	191	35.83 (18.8%)	116.83 (61.2%)	16 (8.4%)	0	14.34 (7.5%)	8 (4.2%)

Table A-30. Responses to question #34: Which of the following circumstances prevent domestic service at your site (check all that apply)?

<i>Region</i>	<i>Subject outside of mission</i>	<i>Limited or unavailable financial resources</i>	<i>Limited or unavailable personnel resources</i>	<i>Lack of necessary archives or artifacts</i>	<i>Board, staff, or volunteer resistance</i>	<i>Issue is too sensitive in this community</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No Answer</i>
<i>New England</i>	4	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
<i>Southern N. Atlantic</i>	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
<i>Northern S. Atlantic</i>	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
<i>Southern S. Atlantic</i>	1	1	2	2	0	0	1	1
<i>Eastern N. Central</i>	4	3	4	5	0	0	1	1
<i>Western N. Central</i>	4	5	5	9	0	0	2	0
<i>Eastern S. Central</i>	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
<i>Western S. Central</i>	0	1	4	5	0	0	0	0
<i>Rocky Mountains</i>	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
<i>Basin and Plateau</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Pacific</i>	4	1	1	2	0	0	1	1
Total	20	16	18	28	0	1	9	3

APPENDIX B. FIGURES

Figure B-1. Advertisement for the Thor Electric Washing Machine.



**A Servant
for 3 cents a week!**

THERE is no more faithful servant than a *Thor Electric Washing Machine*, and it will do an average week's washing in an hour, at a cost of less than 3 cents for electricity. Note that important facts are so fully proved and independent—when it can be had at all—instead of assurances and promises to the Thor-washers over faith. Clothes washed quickly clean—much less time on them—and no need to hire a maid.

Thor

Electric Washing Machine

You can now buy the *Thor* from *Thor* dealers anywhere in the United States for only—

\$10 Down; Balance in Small Monthly Payments

The special *Thor* Special Plan gives the first month's payment of every installment. In this way the *Thor* costs no more than the hire of a maid.

No Extra Cost for Special Motor for Any Private Lighting Plant

Built to last a Lifetime
The *Thor* has no moving parts that wear down. The only possible trouble is the motor, which is built to last for years. Every *Thor* is built to last for years.

Guaranteed
The *Thor* is backed by our liberal home guarantee which is the best in the world. You get the best of the *Thor* when you buy it from a *Thor* dealer. *Thor* is the best washing machine in the world.

Send for Free Book on Washing

We will send you a free book on washing and the care of all *Thor* clothes, and the *Thor* Special Plan, which shows you how to get the most out of your *Thor* washing machine. Write to us for the book and we will send it to you.

Hurley Machine Company
Dept. 2014, 28 Jackson Blvd., CHICAGO, ILL.
Branches: NEW YORK TORONTO

Manufacturers of the Thor Electric Home Ironer and Thor Electric Cleaners

Source: *Ladies' Home Journal*, (April 1909), 100.

Figure B-2. Advertisement for the Coffield Motor Washer Company.

SOLVING THE SERVANT PROBLEM

By J. Horace Lytle

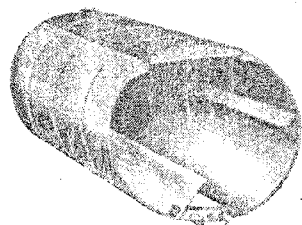
The "Good Old Days" are no more—But a new Day is dawning: A message of interest to Housewives and Housekeepers.

There has been a lot of talk lately in a lot of homes where years ago when the great mother was a busy worker and the father a busy man, the wife and mother would do the housework. But when she got her husband home at night, she would do the housework. But when she got her husband home at night, she would do the housework. But when she got her husband home at night, she would do the housework.

But all that was long ago, before there was such a thing as a "Domestic Problem". I have heard of wonderful things these "Good Old Days" as those who read this know.

The problem of today is to get a good servant at any price. And that is something that it is almost impossible to do. They are both scarce and expensive. So many who otherwise would be available for the home have "fallen for" the lure of the factories.

They do not seem to consider that it is only good to let after all expenses are paid, that really counts—and that,



Sanitary Cap for Tub Is Topped Inside

The Coffield Electric Tub Top is made of the best material and is guaranteed to last for years. It is made in a sanitary manner and is guaranteed to last for years. It is made in a sanitary manner and is guaranteed to last for years.

even in spite of the new labor wages that everything is receiving when the domestic real are paid, not for mention numerous in plenty, there is little or no chance that what a lot will mean what a good domestic may earn. And, be it remembered, domestics will get their living expenses free, even at present prices.

And since the conditions are as they are, the only thing that the head of a home may do to help them as they exist—just as the husband must face similar problems that look up in his business.

And the women of America are doing it! They are using it thru short cuts, labor saving devices and scientific management—in very much the same manner

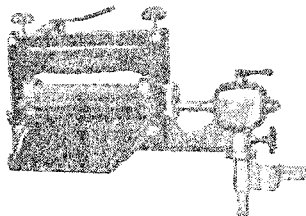
as their husbands are using it in their business. But since she was so busy, her women are making more of an interest in National affairs, they are seeing the situation, and are anxious to find the way for the things of today to a restrictive period. All this is well, for it will be the woman who will be the man.

But it is necessary to find management in the 20th century. You have to do this problem the "Domestic Problem", and the added problem of finding time to do these other things in spite of the servant problem. Yet always of necessity is born the solution of each problem. And so of late years has been the solution of these various problems with which women managers of homes have been confronted.

The answer is in labor saving devices for the home. Electricity has made much of this possible, now that modern homes are almost wired for current. Thus we have Electric Washing Machines, Electric Sewing Machines, Electric Stoves and a host of other devices too numerous to mention.

Take the Electric Washer alone for an example. This year the business will run to over \$100,000,000 and would go higher if manufacturers could only get enough material. Last year this business amounted to only \$30,000,000 and the year before last was only \$10,000,000. An increase of eighty-five million dollars in the annual sale of washing machines brought about in just two years!

"I'll say the women are buying them!" Many housewives of America appreciate their Electric Washers themselves. It is such a pleasure to sit at when you have it really doing on such things to help them get down the "hard work". If there is the right type of Electric Washer in the home the laundress is always better satisfied for least the



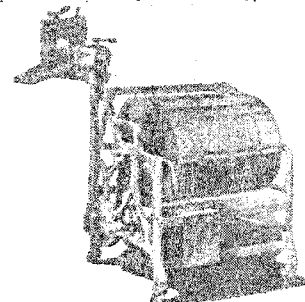
The Construction of the 33 in. Squeezing Washer is Improvemenly Superior

The new design and the 33 in. Squeezing Washer is a new type of washer and is guaranteed to last for years. It is made in a sanitary manner and is guaranteed to last for years.

amount is done in a day for the same amount in half the time, which is a better way of putting it and interests her more. Furthermore, besides being laundress



to suit your taste, the clothes will last more than twice as long for there is no wear. But use any old machine will do, Frankly, the wife's own personal knowledge covers but one that is as far ahead of all others that it is in a class by itself. This machine has so many points of superiority that it will appeal to all



View Showing Full Machine and Washer Sewing in One of the Many Positions

In every detail of construction the Coffield Electric Washer is of the highest quality. It is made in a sanitary manner and is guaranteed to last for years. It is made in a sanitary manner and is guaranteed to last for years.

women who would demonstrate. And the name of the one I have in mind is the Coffield.

To those interested in the above, the undoubted will be glad to send complete catalog and name of the nearest Coffield dealer. A postal will do just as well in better.

THE Coffield MOTOR WASHING CO. DAYTON, OHIO. Producers of Washday Senses Since 1904

Figure B-3. Cover of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1903, featuring Charles Dana Gibson's "American Girl."



Source: Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 38.

Figure B-4. Charles Allen Winter, "The Militant," August 1913, *The Masses*, cover.

The MASSES



The Militant

Source: Kitsch, 84.

Figure B-5. *The Crisis*, Easter 1915, cover.

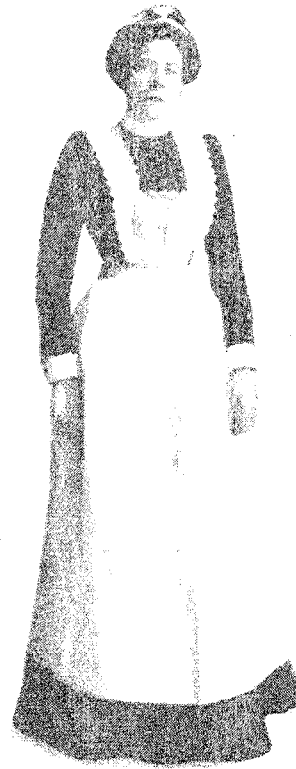


Source: Kitsch, 96.

Figure B-6. Chambermaid in morning and afternoon livery.



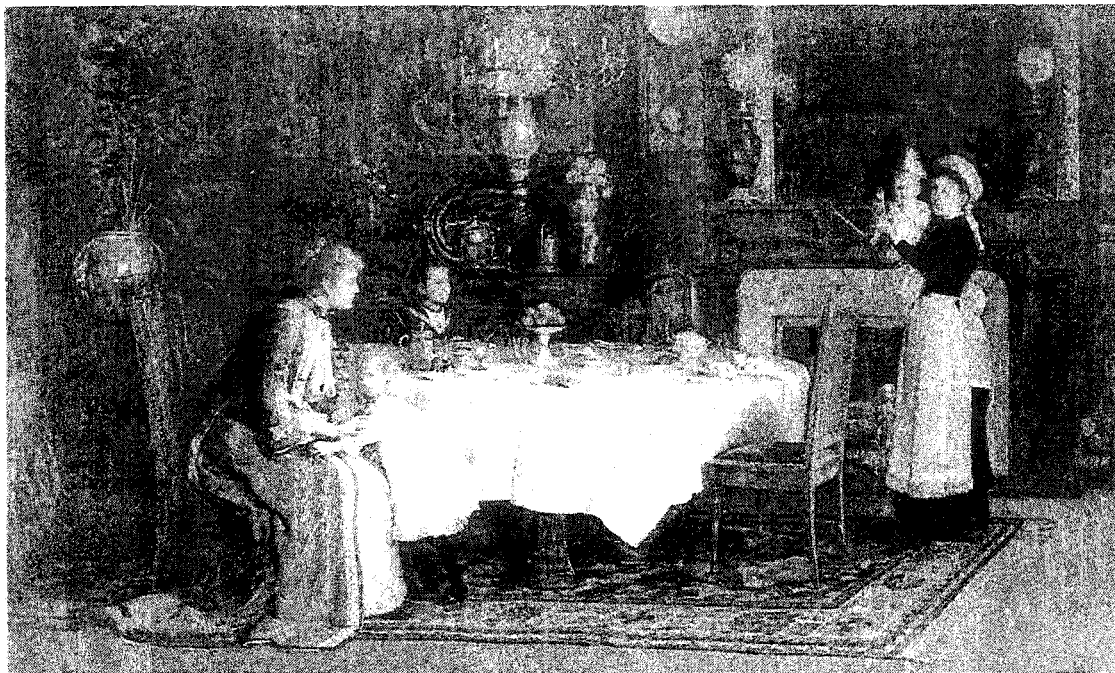
Facing page 20.
CHAMBERMAID, IN MORNING
LIVERY.



CHAMBERMAID, IN AFTERNOON
LIVERY.

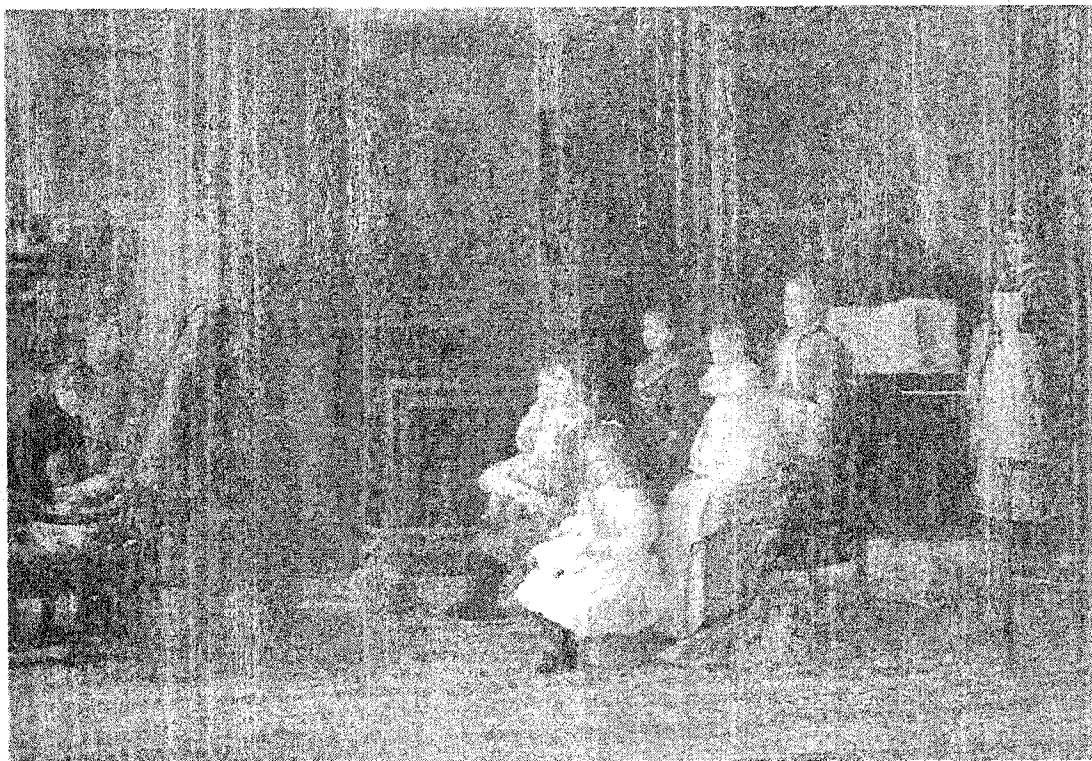
Source: Mrs. [Lida] Seely, *Mrs. Seely's Cookbook: A Manual of French and American Cookery with Chapters on Domestic Servants, Their Rights and Duties and Many Other Details of Household Management*, Reprint of 1902 edition (Birmingham, AL: Oxmoor House, 1984), facing page 20.

Figure B-7. William Henry Lippincott, *Infantry in Arms*, 1887.



Source: Elizabeth O'Leary, *At Beck and Call: The Representation of Domestic Servants in Nineteenth-Century American Painting* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 178.

Figure B-8. William Henry Lippincott, *Punch and Judy Show (A Private Rehearsal)*, 1896.



Source: O'Leary, 179.

Figure B-9. Philip Hale, *A Family Affair*, 1916.



Source: O'Leary, 224.

Figure B-10. Winslow Homer, *Nurse and Child*, 1866.



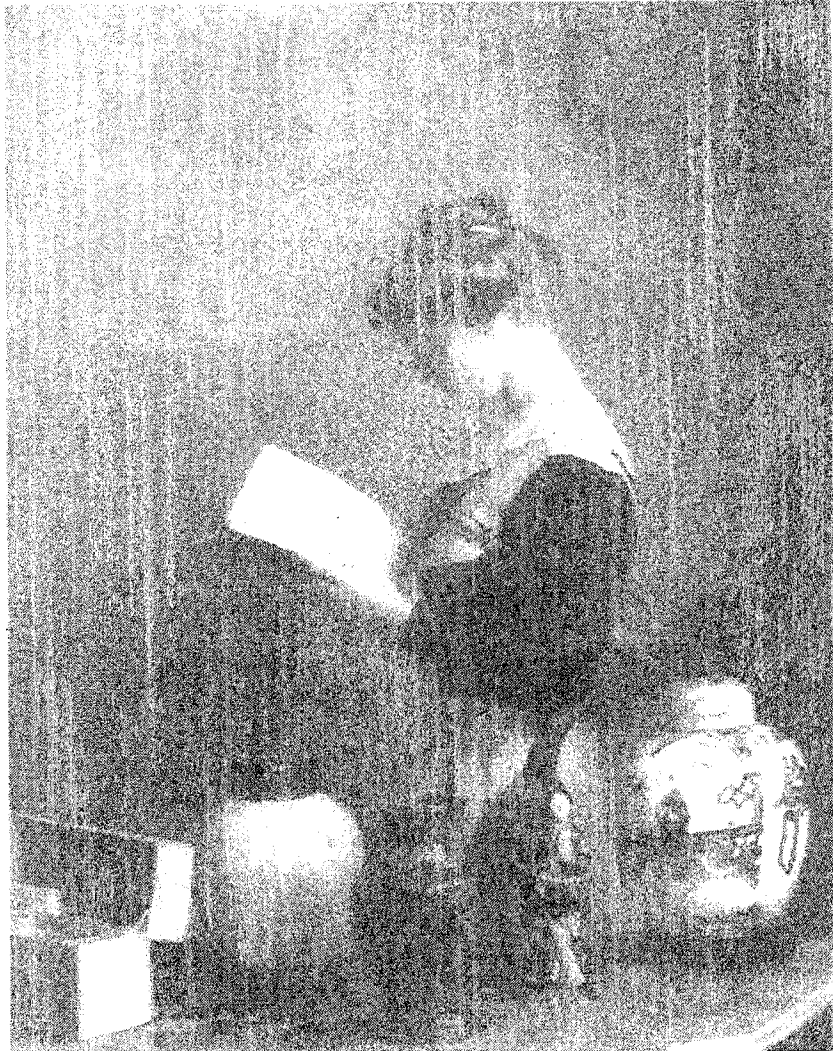
Source: O'Leary, 194.

Figure B-11. William McGregor Paxton, *The Kitchen Maid*, 1907.



Source: O'Leary, plate 8.

Figure B-12. William McGregor Paxton, *The House Maid*, 1910.



Source: O'Leary, 227.

Figure B-13. William McGregor Paxton, *The Waitress*, 1923.



Source: O'Leary, 247.

Figure B-14. Lilly Martin Spencer, *The Jolly Washerwoman*, 1851.



Source: O'Leary, plate 3.

Figure B-15. Lilly Martin Spencer, *Shake Hands?* 1854.



Source: O'Leary, 67.

Figure B-16. Jean Baptiste Adolph Lafosse after Lilly Martin Spencer, *The Fruits of Temptation*, c. 1857.



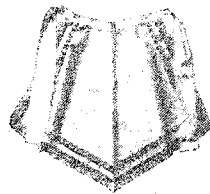
Source: O'Leary, 97.

Figure B-17. "The Correct Apron For Maids."



The Correct Apron for Maids

Designs by
Antoinette Rouland



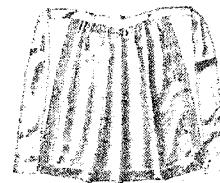
The All-around apron is of White
Linen and Valenciennes Lace

EVERY housekeeper should realize that the appearance of the maids in her house is an indication of her good taste and respectability, and that, in a measure, the standard of the establishment from the maids' dress is expected. And it need not be a matter of expense to have them well dressed. It is simply one of judgment to provide the correct outfit to wear on different occasions.

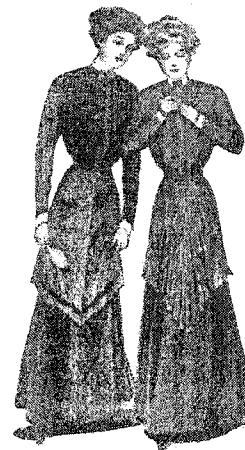
Simple-made neck aprons of white or washed with white aprons are generally the most economical, useful and becoming dresses for maids. Although a grey shade of green may be chosen at the discretion of the purchaser. This, however, is something of an innovation and might be considered too formal in color where an extra dress could be afforded.

The apron in colors and cuts vary not far from the recognized style dress with its short, low, two, except where the apron is trimmed with bands of material; in this case a becoming set of buttons or collar and cuffs to match gives a neat finishing touch. This new is illustrated on two of the aprons at the top of the page. The one with the top and the other with the two carriage. Some further designs will be made of low cut aprons of one of the colored materials selected.

Illustrations by
Emma Troth



A Simple Style of Maids' Apron in White
Linen, Trimmed with Valenciennes Lace



Well-finished Lady's Maids' Waistcoat Black Dress
and Black Silk Apron



WITH the use of such durable materials as lawn, cotton, fine linen and dotted Swiss muslin aprons do not need replenishing more than once a year. The best trimming for the large aprons are Hamburg edgings in some designs such as ruffles and lace, and for those of the solid conventional pattern, as they withstand the wear and tear of frequent laundering much better than the ornate, flower or circle patterns.


For a plain finish, deep bands with or without edgings are in particular good use, like the one shown in the upper right-hand corner on the characteristic type. This and its close relatives have been made very attractive and becoming by the transfer of prints which extend from the waist line in the front over the shoulders to the strings in the back. The apron at the extreme left of this set row is one so generally useful that it can hardly be omitted. It is suitable alike for chambermaid, ordinary servant, or for afternoon use. The new material for it is made of medium weight.

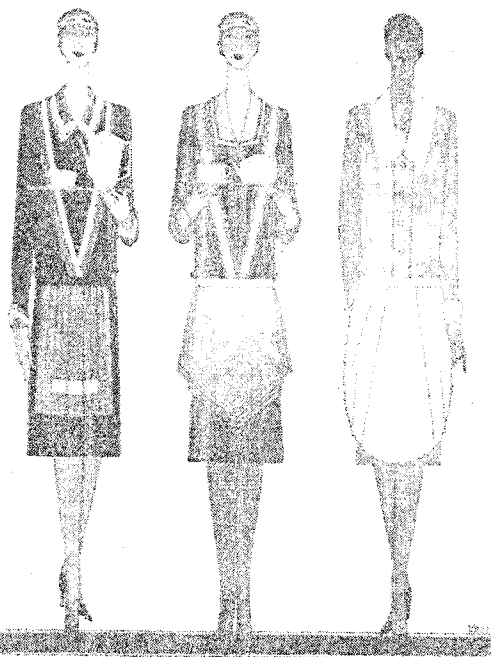
Careful sewing at the waist line is necessary in the making of better-looking aprons, and they should be laundered with very thin starch, but above everything else they should be spotless.

Source: *The Ladies Home Journal*, March 1910, 47.

Figure B-18. "Color Is Now Smart For Maids' Uniforms."

Color
Is Now
Smart for
Maids'
Uniforms





*Uniforms made above in burgundy, black or
purple, is smart for formal occasions; pattern
shown not shown. The pattern shown is not
new, these make popular for the occasion, too.*

*What could be more practical in the early morning
than these the dark-colored, uniform shown in
black, blue, plum or burgundy? Patterns in
green, tan, blue or lavender? A beautiful idea.*

*To give uniform of the color, you can
give a touch of color, blue, lavender, grey,
or tan, to make them. Show them, use the
color of the uniform, green, red or purple.*

MAIDS' uniforms demand important consideration in the color scheme of modern hotels. Smart women are doing more house and office work than the conventional maid and the color presented in the lot. Make uniforms above have long sleeves, with pocket, with pocket, in brown. They are richly distributed and can be obtained in your own shops for use on them under their own name.

The color is to be dark, between black and blue, and should be in the color of the uniform. The color of the uniform is to be dark, between black and blue, and should be in the color of the uniform. The color of the uniform is to be dark, between black and blue, and should be in the color of the uniform.

Source: *Good Housekeeping*, January 1929, 73.

Figure B-19. Advertisement for Gorham Silver.

COUNTRY LIFE



Gorham Silverware

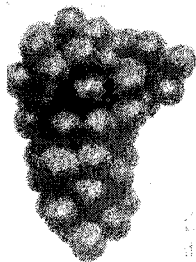
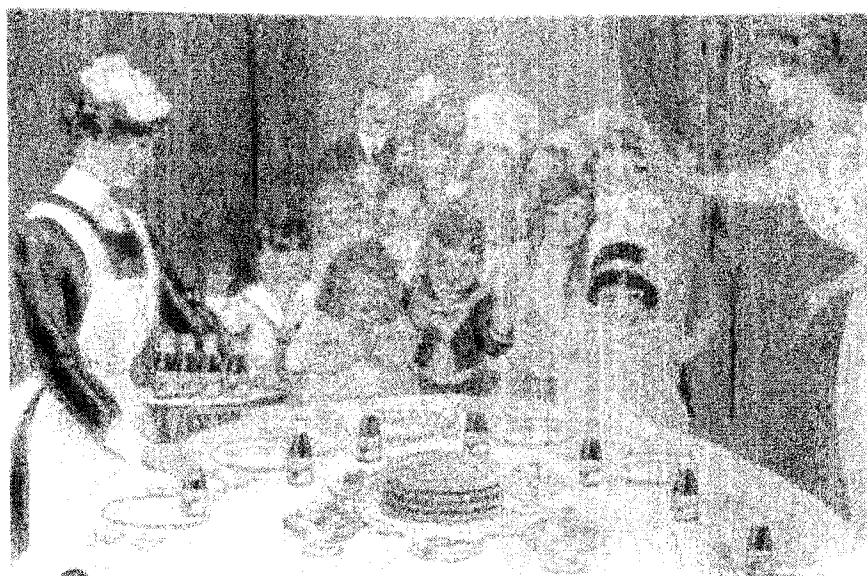
The Part It Plays in Family Life

The part it plays in the family life of a woman is a part that is not often thought of. Yet it is a part that is as important as any other in her life. It is the part that makes her life more comfortable and more enjoyable. It is the part that makes her life more dignified and more refined. It is the part that makes her life more beautiful and more interesting. It is the part that makes her life more meaningful and more satisfying. It is the part that makes her life more complete and more whole. It is the part that makes her life more like a home and less like a hotel. It is the part that makes her life more like a family and less like a crowd. It is the part that makes her life more like a story and less like a page. It is the part that makes her life more like a dream and less like a nightmare. It is the part that makes her life more like a garden and less like a desert. It is the part that makes her life more like a garden and less like a desert. It is the part that makes her life more like a garden and less like a desert.

THE GORHAM COMPANY NEW YORK

Source: *Country Life*, May 1920, 53.

Figure B-20. Advertisement for Welch's grape juice.



You'll make the children happy
with Welch's at the party

Every mother whose child comes to your house for a party will be glad if she knows you are going to serve the children with Welch's.

You get Nature's best AT its best in

Welch's
"The National Drink"

It is made from the purest, finest, ripened Concord grapes, not a harmful
chemical preservative is used. Welch's is a pure, agreeable and healthful
drink for all ages and grades, and is full of natural goodness and natural vitamins.

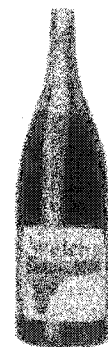
At parties, family gatherings, and in the home, Welch's is the
most popular and healthful drink for the family.

Welch's is sold in 12 oz. bottles and 1/2 gallon jugs. It is also
available in 1/2 gallon jugs and 1/2 gallon jugs. It is also available in
1/2 gallon jugs and 1/2 gallon jugs.

For more information, write to Welch's, 100 West Street, New York, N.Y.

© 1914 Welch's Fruit Products Company, New York, N.Y.

THE WELCH'S GRAPE JUICE COMPANY, Winsted, New York



Source: *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1914, 51.

Figure B-21. Advertisement for the American Telephone and Telegraph Company.

Upstairs, Downstairs, all about the House ... the new Telephone Convenience.



*Telephone
wherever you need them -
a modern way to increase
the living comfort of your
home.*

The telephone is the most convenient and effective means of communication in the home. It allows you to reach anyone at any time, without the inconvenience of leaving your home or the expense of a taxi or motor car. It is a true convenience that can be used in every room of the house.

The telephone is also a very useful means of communication. It allows you to call your doctor, your lawyer, your accountant, or your banker, all from the comfort of your home. It is a true convenience that can be used in every room of the house.

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Source: *House Beautiful*, February 1929, 6.

Figure B-22. Illustration from Dorothea Pearson Neill, "My Experiences With My Servants: Number One, Katie Quinn."



Source: *The Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1914, 38.

Figure B-23. Lewis Hine, Untitled photograph of women in front of an intelligence office, c. 1912.



Source: Izola Forrester, "The 'Girl' Problem," *Good Housekeeping*, September 1912, 376.

Figure B-24. Unidentified photographs by Lewis Hine, c. 1912.

"The Girl" Problem

By Izola Forrester



Photos by Lewis W. Hine

Two jolly girls from Finland who are specialists in laundry work and are doing well in this country, thank you

Source: Forrester, 375.

Figure B-25. Lewis Hine, Unidentified photograph of an immigrant, c. 1912.

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*Housework is natural and
 easy for the hardy women
 of northern European
 countries*

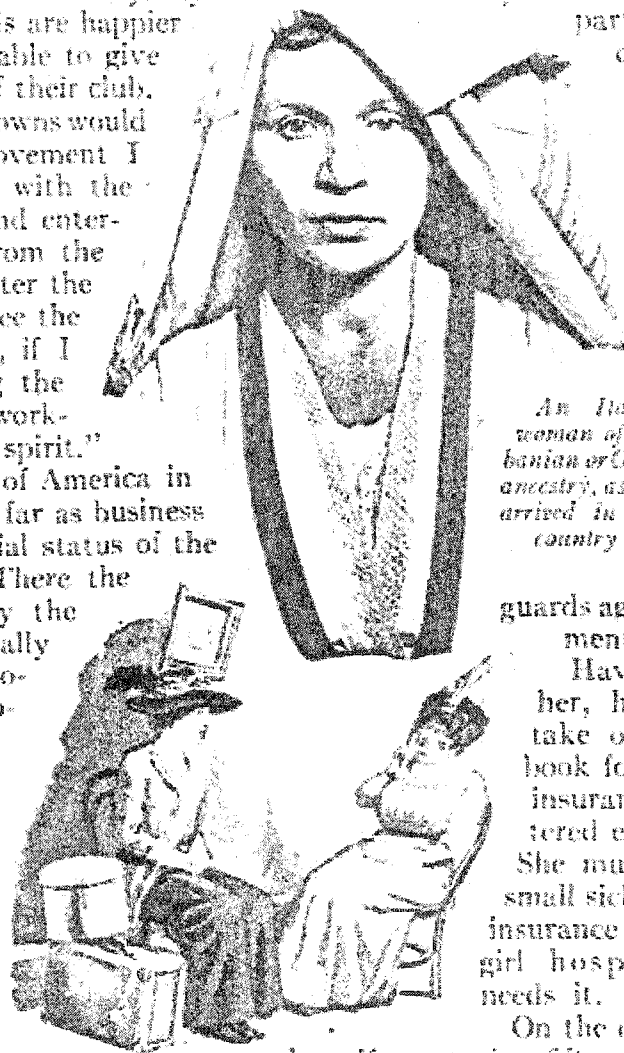
rant, good
 "If you
 solve the
 find a way



Source: Forrester, 377.

Figure B-26. Lewis Hine, photograph from Ellis Island series used in Izola Forrester's article "The 'Girl' Problem."

over together, and some could cast a shadow over use, but the majority the girls are happier were able to give one of their club. other towns would a movement I away with the ship and enter- s up from the And after the could see the corps, if I among the better work- club spirit." ahead of America in ion, so far as business he social status of the us. There the solutely the ndustrially s an eco- is pro- use of icates orts are less issia rives dol- e she per time is absolutely at the stress. It is her actual



An Italian woman of Albanian or Greek ancestry, as she arrived in this country

your breakfast for you any if you may rest at your faith in part of the code of honor Orient which be in into uni dor oth I guards against mental ca Having du her, her mi take out an book for her, insurance st- tered every v She must also small sickness insurance that v girl hospital needs it. On the other f herself must give fifteen days same as she has a right to rec leaves before that time, she wil

Source: Forrester, 380.

Figure B-27. Lewis Hine, *Italian Woman from Albania, Ellis Island, c. 1904.*



Source: George Eastman House, negative 35376,
<http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc/m197701770104_ful.html#topofimage> (28
July 2004).

Figure B-28. Advertisement for the Edison phonograph, featuring Joseph J. Gould's illustration, "One Touch of Memory Makes the Whole World Kin."



THE Phonograph would never have become the great popular entertainer it is but for Edison. He made it desirable by making it good; he made it popular by making it inexpensive.

The EDISON PHONOGRAPH

has brought within reach of all, entertainment which formerly only people of means could afford. It has even displaced more expensive amusements in homes where expense is not considered.

THE NEW RECORDS FOR JUNE

are the work of artists of reputation. Each is perfect of its kind and many of your kind are included. You can hear them at any Edison store May 25th. Get of your dealer, or of us, **THE SUPPLEMENTAL CATALOGUE**, listing all the new June Records, **THE PHONOGRAM**, describing each Record in detail, and the **COMPLETE CATALOGUE**, which lists all Records now obtainable for the Phonograph.



NATIONAL PHONOGRAPH CO., 73 Lakeside Avenue, Orange, N. J.

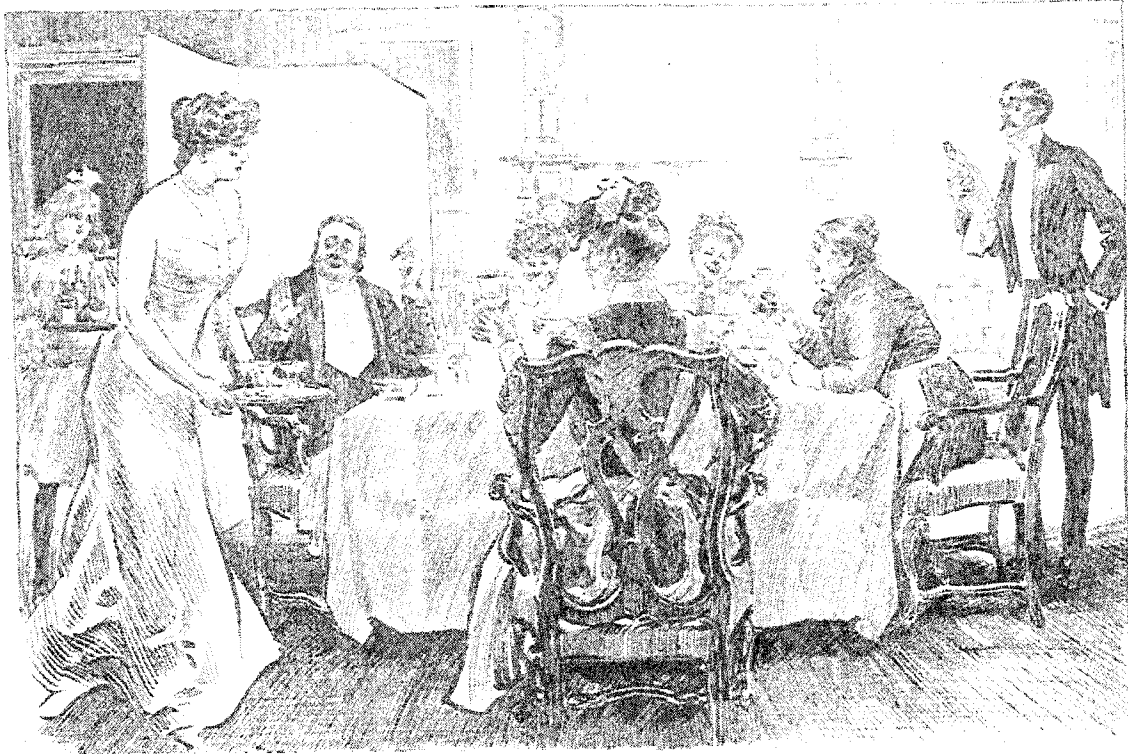
Source: *Ladies Home Journal*, June 1908, 50.

Figure B-29. Charles Dana Gibson, *Studies in Expression: An Imitation of the Lady of the House*, 1902.



Source: Fairfax Downey, *Portrait of an Era as Drawn by C. D. Gibson* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 147.

Figure B-30. Charles Dana Gibson, *By Way of a Change*, 1903.



Source: *Life*, Vol. 42, No. 1083, 104-105.

Figure B-31. Charles Dana Gibson, *Studies in Expression: Bridget Announces That She is Engaged to Be Married*, 1904.



Source: O'Leary, 248.

Figure B-32. Francis Edmonds, *Devotion*, 1857.



Source: O'Leary, plate 6.

Figure B-33. Thomas Waterman Wood, *The Faithful Nurse*, 1893.



Source: O'Leary, 184.

Figure B-34. Winslow Homer, *A Visit from the Old Mistress*, 1876.



Source: O'Leary, 156.

Figure B-35. Advertisement for J. Walter Thompson Company about the marketing of Aunt Jemima Pancake Flour, 1918.



The first shipment of Aunt Jemima Pancake Flour was only 1,000 packages. Today there are nearly three million packages of Aunt Jemima Pancake Flour are brought in a single month.

husions pan-cakes come every hour.

In a few months, the miller perfected special machinery to prepare and mix the ingredients of this recipe. Soon he was ready to furnish, not the recipe, but all the ingredients accurately proportioned and packaged, ready for use, to every homestead in America.

The old word-of-mouth method would not suffice to carry these packages to new breakfast tables as fast as the revolving machinery turned them out.

Magazines and newspapers were going into these very homes. Street cars were taking these housewives to their grocers' stores. Through these magazines, newspapers and street cars, the special smile of Aunt Jemina, with the picture of the cakes and the package that hold the ingredients complete, was introduced to millions of housewives in one pancake season!

The first shipment of Aunt Jemima pancake flour was 1,000 cases. To-day, in one-third of the time that it took the Southern mammy's recipe to creep beyond the town in which she lived, the fame of Aunt Jemima pancakes has spread so that they are being received yearly on 60,000,000 breakfast tables.

Today, many grocers sell in one month more cases than the entire first shipment amounted to.

Machinery has made large-scale production possible. By its operation, it has brought within the reach of millions what before could be enjoyed only by the chosen few.

The economies of advertising have made large-scale selling possible. At the cost of a fraction of a cent per house, advertising has carried direct and over night to millions of homes the message of new products — products which save time, labor, money — products which, while raising the standard of living, reduce its cost.

Reducing Time and Costs

Thirty-five years ago, a well-known, old Virginia family, was famous for its pancakes. Its Southern mammy, the story goes, stood with her face bent over the soapstone griddle and deliberately tossed over his shoulder, into the middle of the kitchen, every pancake which did not come up to her standard.

Constantly relatives, then friends, spied upon mammy or wheedled this famous recipe from her.

In thirty-five years, however, the recipe for these cakes had traveled from that household to only a dozen other houses in the town and to half a dozen scattered towns throughout the country where one-time guests under that hospitable roof lived.

Twelve years ago, a miller in Missouri had a wonderful recipe for pancakes. Unlike the Southern mammy, with his recipe,

J. WALTER THOMPSON COMPANY
New York
Chicago Boston Detroit Cincinnati

11th Avenue, New York, N.Y. 1918

Source: "Emergence of Advertising in America," J. Walter Thompson Company Archives, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, <<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/ea>> (8 November 2004).

Figure B-36. Advertisement for A.1. Steak Sauce.

*Have you been searching
for years for a
"LOST FOOD FLAVOR?"*

In the South there you find shades of flavor that are envied by housewives the country over. There you find uncommon good things to eat that old Southern mammae cook in magic pots and pans. What flavors they bring to the table! How do they get those shades of flavor... the flavors that make everything they serve such good eating, just seasoning... that is the whole art and mystery of it.



Of course, in Southern kitchens and on Southern tables, A.1. sauce is used and loved. It is seasoning that makes those Dixie dishes seem with extra goodness... goodness that women everywhere want in their dishes. Truly, it is marvelous, marvelous the way this sauce adds new flavor and new zest to foods. On roasts, or in mayonnaise, in cream sauces, cheese dishes, fish, and in scores of other ways, your old favorites become new discoveries when A.1. is added... a few drops of it in your cooking... or sprinkled on foods at the table. Taste it... in this recipe, for instance:

Chicken à la Maryland
Fry, clean and dry up over 1 pound chicken into pieces for serving. Mince 1/2 cup A.1. Sauce, rub lightly with flour, dip in beaten eggs and bread crumbs. Fry in butter. Fry in butter until golden brown. Then bake in a moderate oven at 375° F. for 15 minutes. Pour cream sauce over the chicken. Garnish with corn frills, and bacon.



SEND FOR THIS FREE BOOKLET

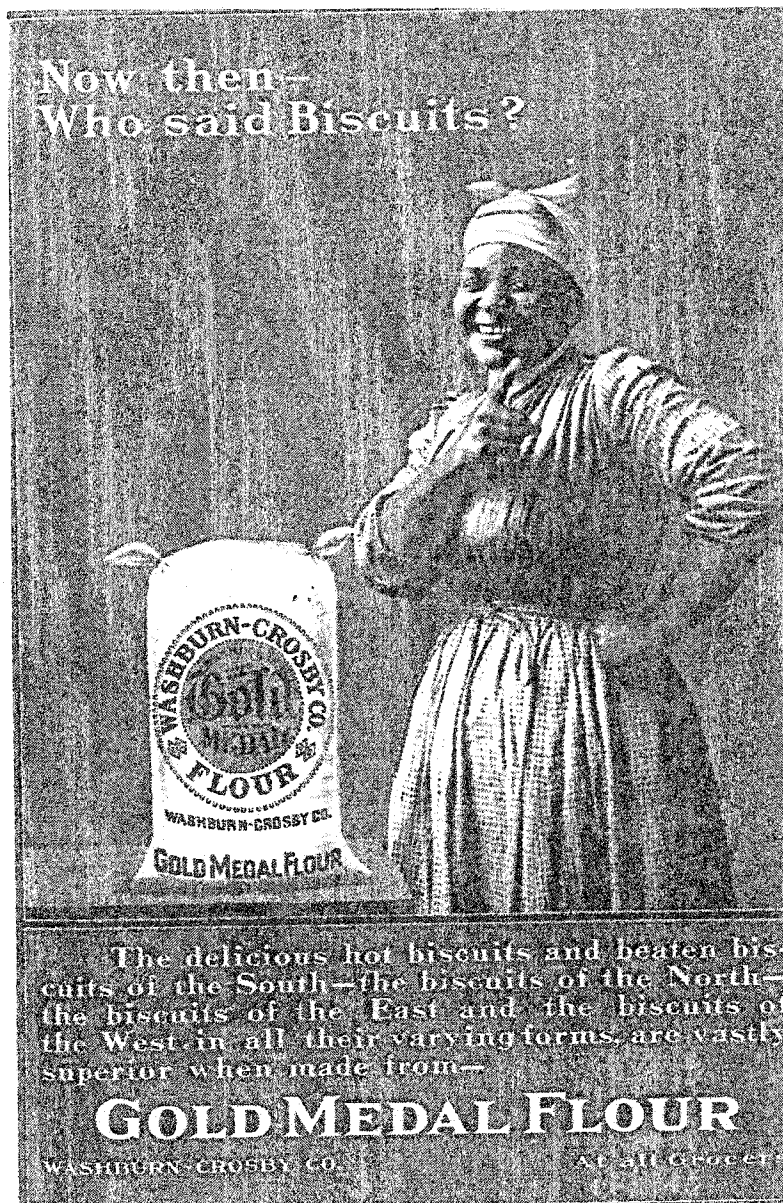
G. F. Heublein & Co.
15 West Street, Hartford, Conn.
Please send me a free copy of the novel booklet, "LITTLE LOST FOOD FLAVORS" - the legend of world-famous dishes and their recipes.

Name _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____

Source: *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1929, 144.

Figure B-37. Advertisement for Gold Medal Flour.

Now then—
Who said Biscuits?



The delicious hot biscuits and beaten biscuits of the South—the biscuits of the North—the biscuits of the East and the biscuits of the West in all their varying forms, are vastly superior when made from—

GOLD MEDAL FLOUR

WASHBURN-CROSBY CO. AT ALL GROCERIES

Source: *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1910, 43.

Figure B-38. Illustration from Mrs. James [Sallie May] Dooley's book, *Dem Good Ole Times*, 1906.



Source: Mrs. James [Sallie May] Dooley, *Dem Good Ole Times* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1906), plate 1.

Figure B-39. Charles Van Schaick, *Norwegian laundresses, cooks, parlor maids, and scullery girls, Black River Falls, Wisconsin, c. 1890.*



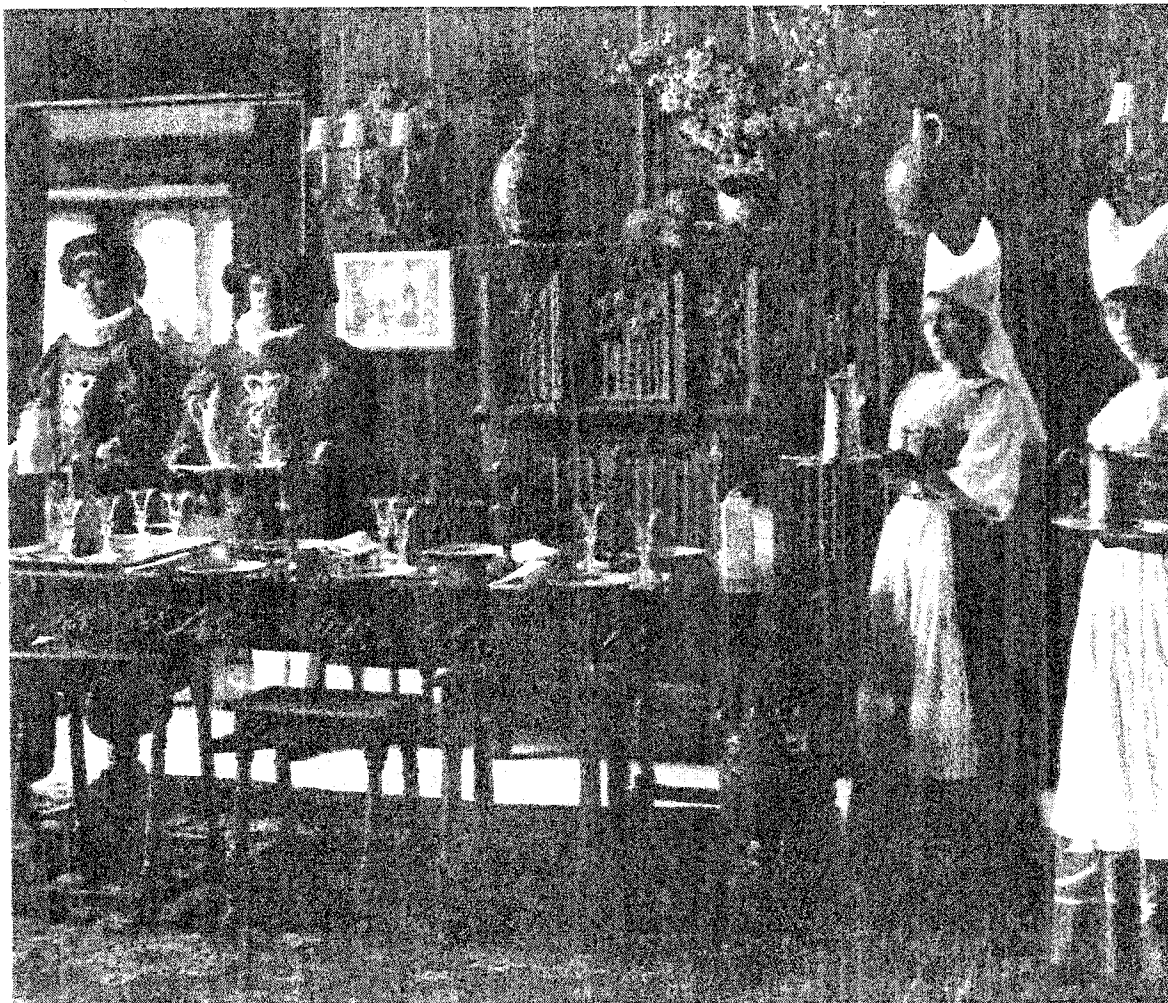
Source: Van Schaick Collection, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Figure B-40. Servants of Caroline Soutter Sinclair, c.1880.



Source: Brucemore Historic Site Archives, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Figure B-41. Shakespeare Ball, Stan Hywet Hall, 1916.



Source: Archives, Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens, Akron, Ohio.

Figure B-42. Servants in costume for the Shakespeare Ball, Stan Hywet Hall, 1916.



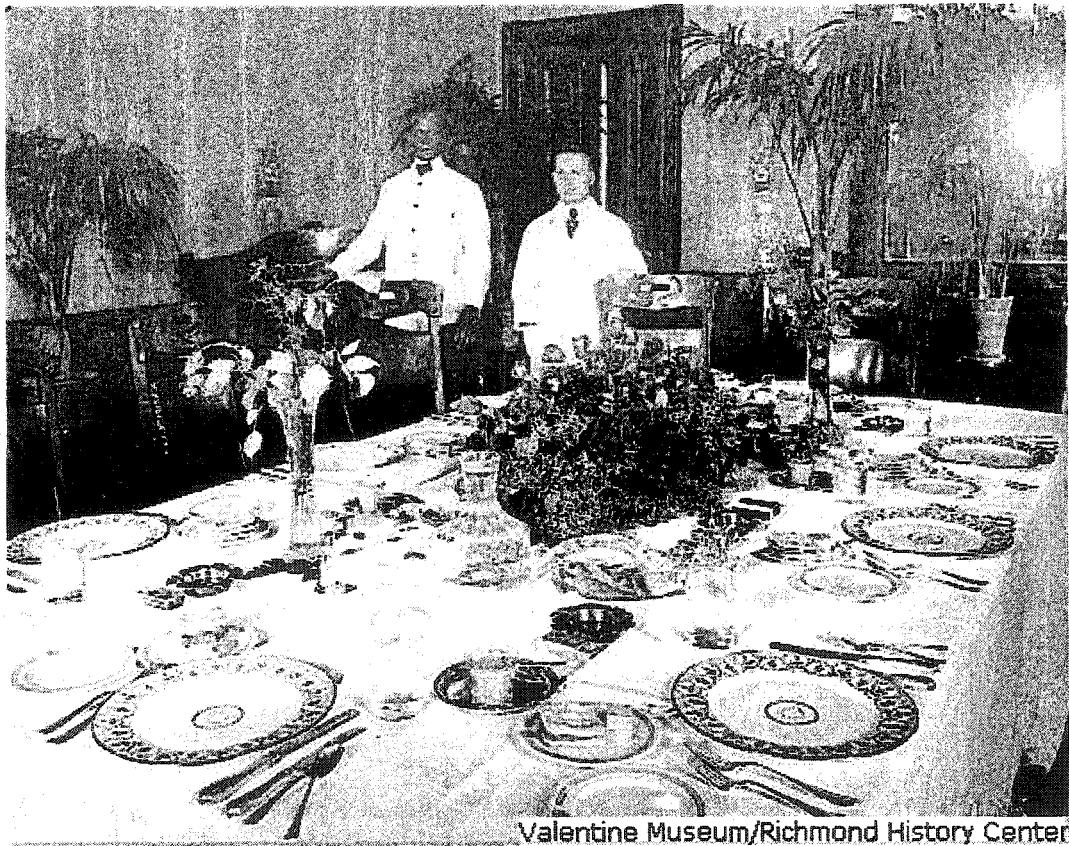
Source: Archives, Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens, Akron, Ohio.

Figure B-43. Hill House Staff, c. 1908.



Source: Craig Johnson, *James J. Hill House* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1993), 32.

Figure B-44. Dining Room at the Westmoreland Club's Annual Banquet, Richmond, Virginia, n.d.



Source: "Through the Lens of Time: Images of African Americans from the Cook Collection," Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries, <http://www.library.vcu.edu/cfapps/jbc/speccoll/cook.cfm?Choice=Single&Search=0900> > (29 June 2004).

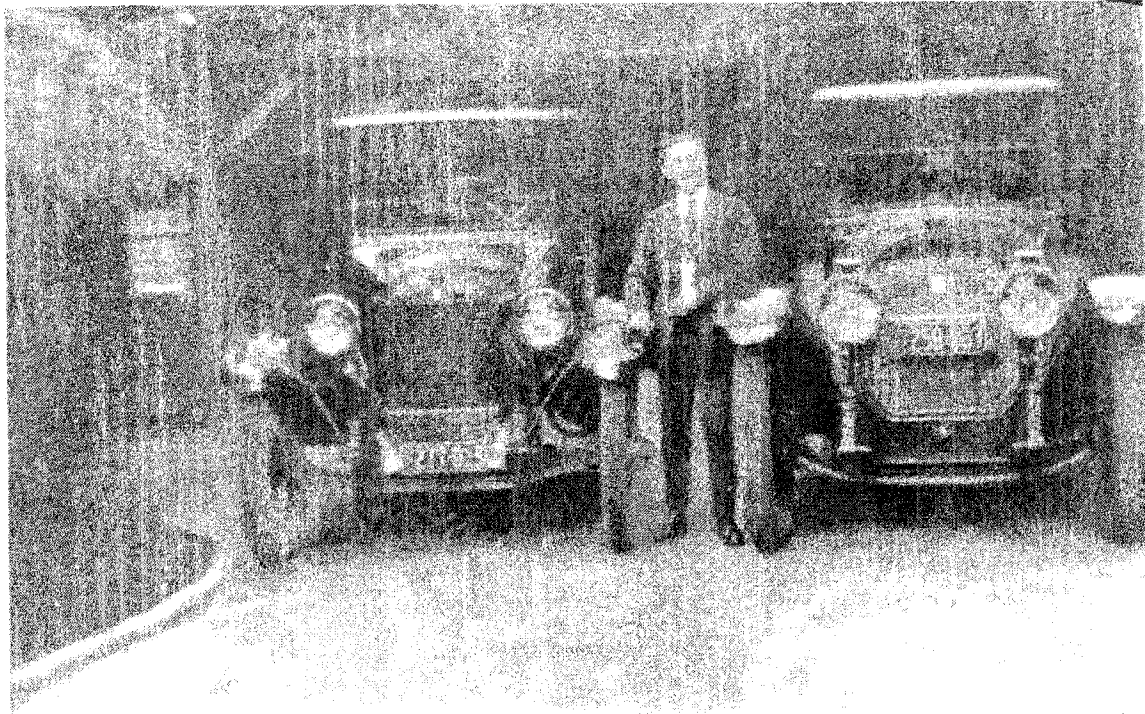
Figure B-45. Thanksgiving Dinner, c. 1905.



Valentine Museum/Richmond History Center

Source: "Through the Lens of Time: Images of African Americans from the Cook Collection," Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries, <http://www.library.vcu.edu/cfapps/jbc/speccoll/cook.cfm?Choice=Single&Search=1209> > (29 June 2004).

Figure B-46. Chauffeur Albert Batten with the Douglas family's automobiles, c. 1920.



Source: Bruce more Historic Site Archives, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Figure B-47. The Douglas family in Europe, 1928. Ella McDannel, "Danny," is seated in the front row, second from right; chauffeur Bert Batten poses from the automobile.



Source: Brucemore Historic Site Archives, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Figure B-48. "Child and Mammy," Henrico County, Virginia, c. 1875.



Source: "Through the Lens of Time: Images of African Americans from the Cook Collection," Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries, <<http://www.library.vcu.edu/cfapps/jbc/cpeccoll/cook.cfm?Choice=Single&Search=0007>> (29 June 2004).

Figure B-49. Mulatto domestic, known by the family that employed her as "Nurse," with child, 1907.



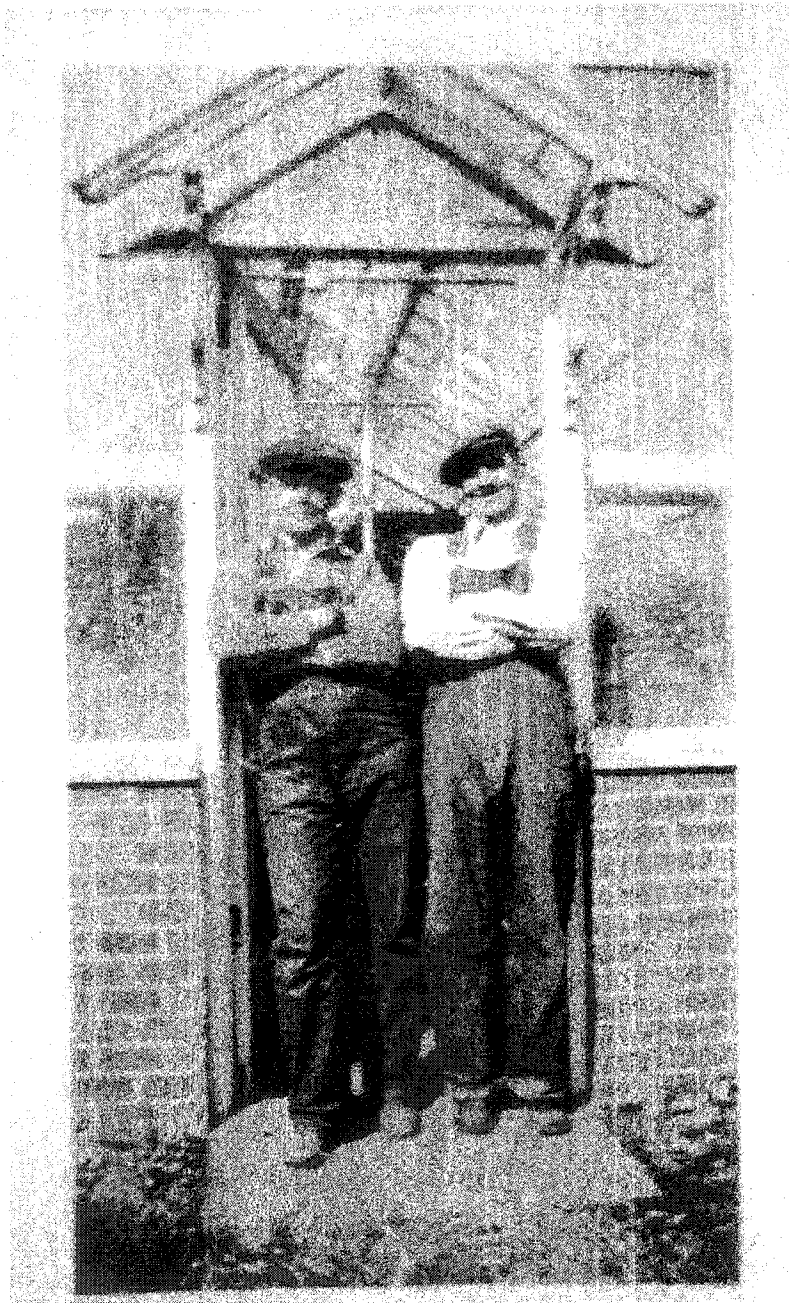
Source: Susan Tucker, *Telling Memories Among Southern Women* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 270.

Figure B-50. Robert T. Reynolds with his nurse, c. 1900.



Source: Minnesota Historical Society, Visual Resources Database,
<<http://collections.mnhs.org/visualresources/image.cfm?imageid=176860&Page=3&Keywords=domestics&SearchType=Basic>> (23 May 2003).

Figure B-51. Archie White and a fellow gardener in the door of Brucemore's greenhouse, c. 1925.



Source: Brucemore Historic Site Archives, courtesy of Agnes White Hembera, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Figure B-52. Jim Hepburn mowing the lawn at Bruce more, c. 1930.



Source: Bruce more Historic Site Archives, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, courtesy of Agnes White Hembera.

Figure B-53. Henrietta Abadie, maid for the Douglas family, c. 1907.



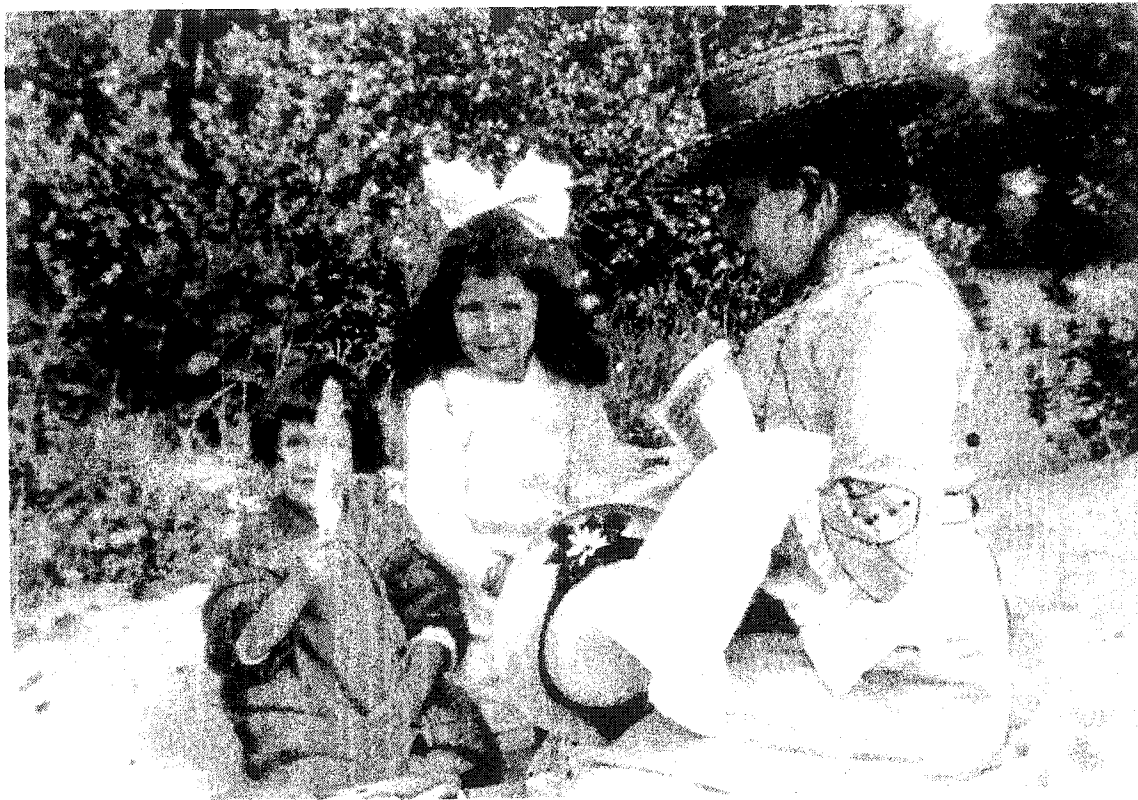
Source: Brucemore Historic Site Archives, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Figure B-54. Nurse Ella McDannel ("Danny") with Barbara Douglas, 1909.



Source: Bruce more Historic Site Archives, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Figure B-55. Nurse Ella McDannel on the beach with Barbara and Ellen Douglas, c. 1915.



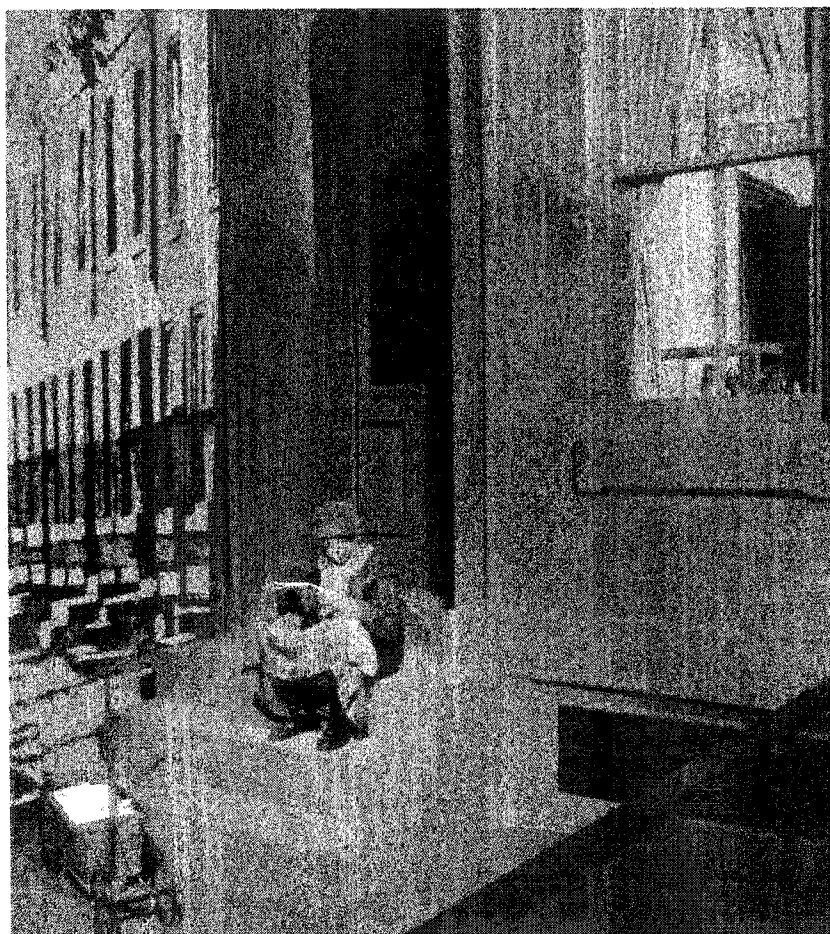
Source: Bruce more Historic Site Archives, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Figure B-56. Segregated train car vignette in the National Museum of American History's exhibit, "Field to Factory Afro-American Migration 1915-1940."



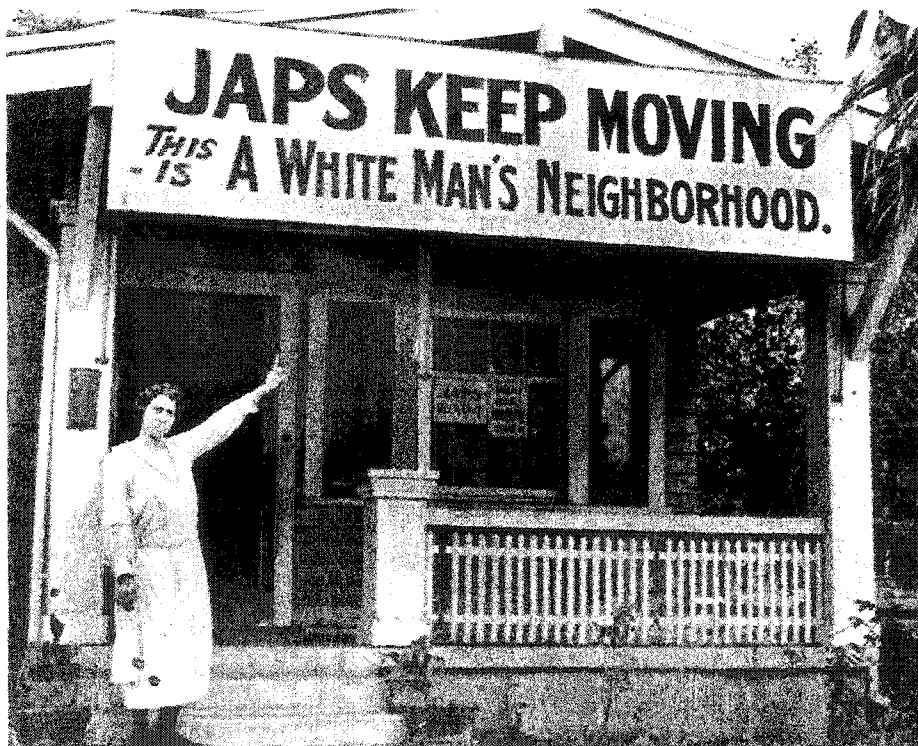
Source: Spencer R. Crew, *Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration 1915-1940* (Washington D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987), facing page 40.

Figure B-57. African American migrants adjust to life in the North, vignette in the National Museum of American History's exhibit, "Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration 1915-1940."



Source: Crew, facing page 41.

Figure B-58. “Japs Keep Moving – This is a White Man’s Neighborhood,” c. 1920. This image is part of the Immigration section of the Smithsonian Institution’s exhibition, “A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans & the U. S. Constitution.” This photograph is juxtaposed with the following text: “Japanese immigration to the continental United States was concentrated during the years 1900-1920, and was always governed by changing legal restrictions and relations between the two nations. As the population and success of Japanese communities grew in the United States, so did the racial prejudice against them. The anti-Japanese campaigns began with racial stereotypes and propaganda, and became institutionalized into laws that denied Japanese citizenship and prohibited property ownership.”



Source: National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, “A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the U. S. Constitution,”

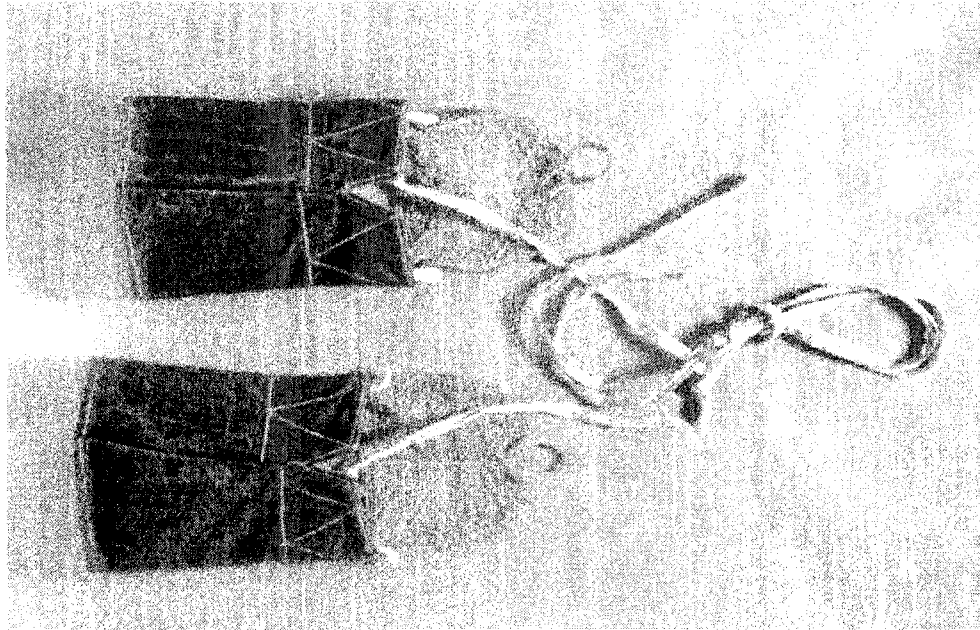
http://americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/non-flash/immigration_racism.html (26 November 2003).

Figure B-59. "Police frisk man of Japanese ancestry," December 7, 1941. This image is part of the Removal section of the Smithsonian Institution's exhibition, "A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans & the U. S. Constitution." This photograph is juxtaposed with text from the Fourth Amendment, "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons to be seized."



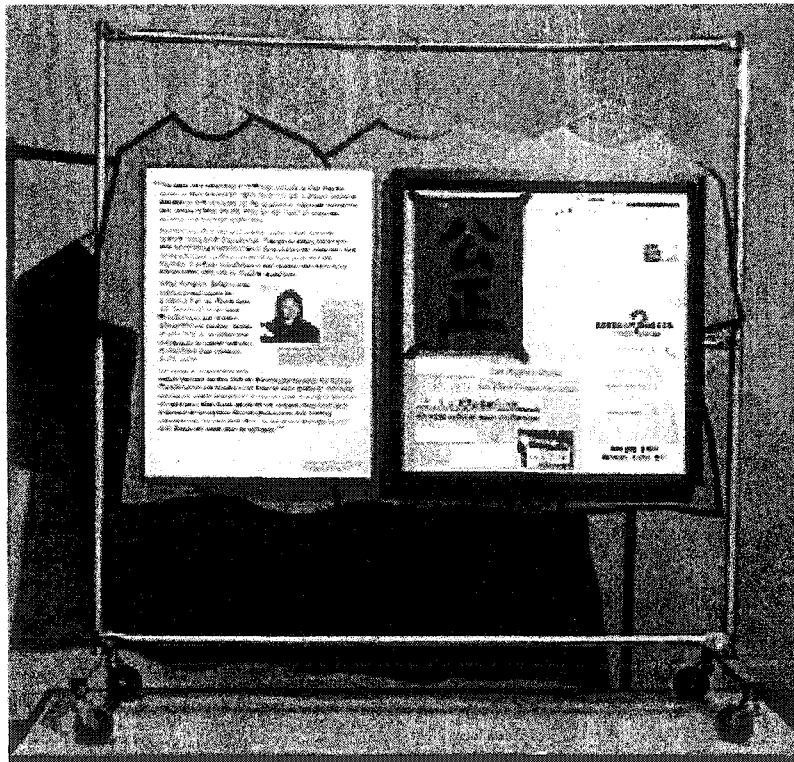
Source: National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, "A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the U. S. Constitution,"
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/non-flash/removal_constitution.htm> (25 February 2004).

Figure B-60. Pair of hand covers (gloves), displayed in the National Museum of American History's exhibit "A More Perfect Union."



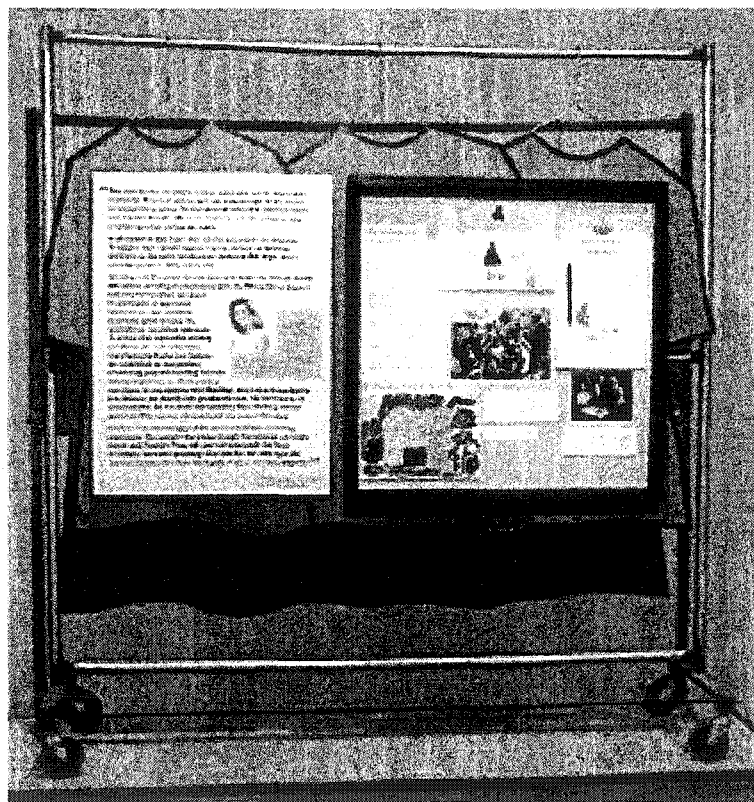
Source: National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, "A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the U. S. Constitution,"
<<http://americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/collection/image.asp?ID=517>> (25 February 2004).

Figure B-61. Panel from the Dialogue section of the National Museum of American History's exhibit, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place." This panel features material provided by Julie Su, a community activist and attorney for the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, which represented the El Monte workers. She is also co-founder of Sweatshop Watch. Her statement included the following excerpt: "Let us say to corporations who exploit garment workers that we will not pay a price for this fashion. Manufacturers must exercise their power to eliminate sweatshops, rather than pay lip service to codes of conduct and then cry ignorance when those standards are violated. They must stop scapegoating immigrants, blaming government and insisting consumers do not care. Only then can we ensure that the horror of El Monte will never, ever be repeated."



Source: National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place," <<http://americanhistory.si.edu/dialogue/5t4.htm>> (25 February 2004).

Figure B-62. Panel from the Dialogue section of the National Museum of American History's exhibit, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place." This panel features material provided by celebrity spokesperson Kathie Lee Gifford, whose Wal-Mart clothing line was revealed to be the product of sweatshops. Her statement included the following excerpt: "In all candor, it was anger that initially galvanized my response. To suggest that I would support putting children in factories anywhere in the world bordered on obscenity. But anger won't solve the problem. Only action will. . . . To ensure that responsible working conditions are met in factories manufacturing Kathie Lee fashions, we established an independent monitoring program including surprise factory inspections to check working conditions."



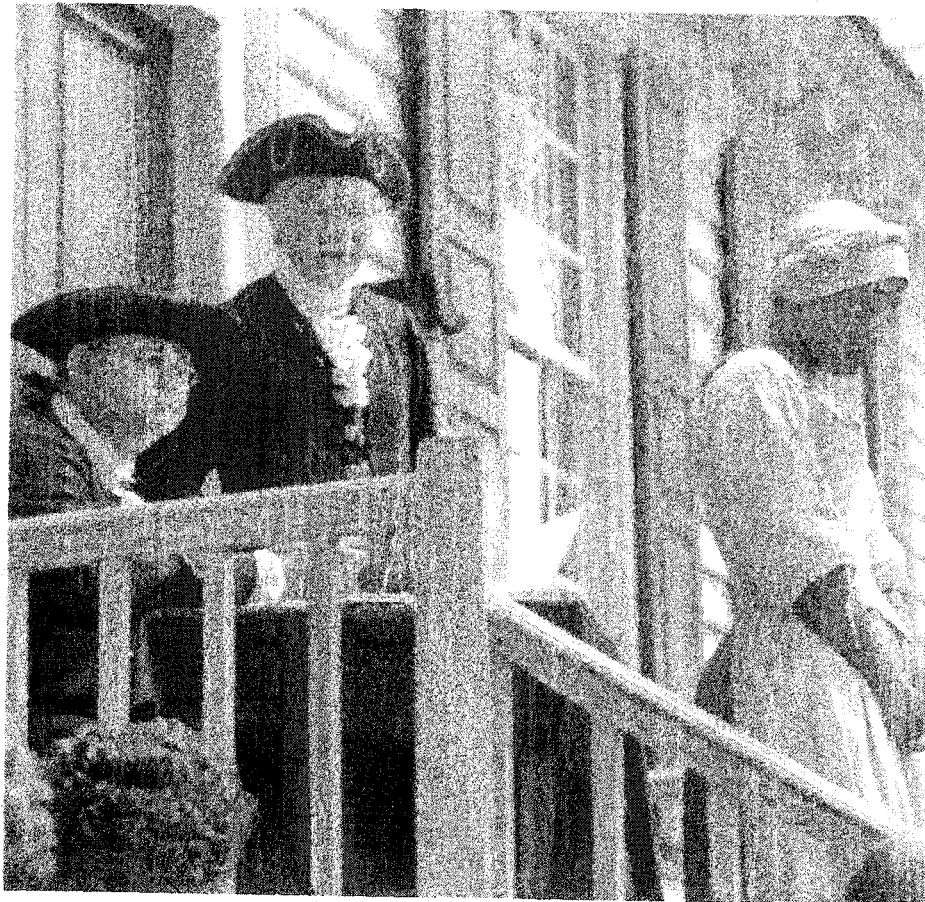
Source: National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place," <<http://americanhistory.si.edu/sweatshops/dialogue/5t8.htm>> (25 February 2004).

Figure B-63. Plaque on the pedestrian bridge between Colonial Williamsburg's Visitor Center and the Historic Area, 21 March 2003.



Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-64. Scene from Colonial Williamsburg's 1994 recreation of a slave being auctioned at a public sale.



Source: Cary Carson, ed., *Becoming Americans: Our Struggle to be Both Free and Equal* (Williamsburg, VA: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1998), 61.

Figure B-65. First-person interpretive program at Colonial Williamsburg, "Among the Dipping Gourds," 22 March 2003.



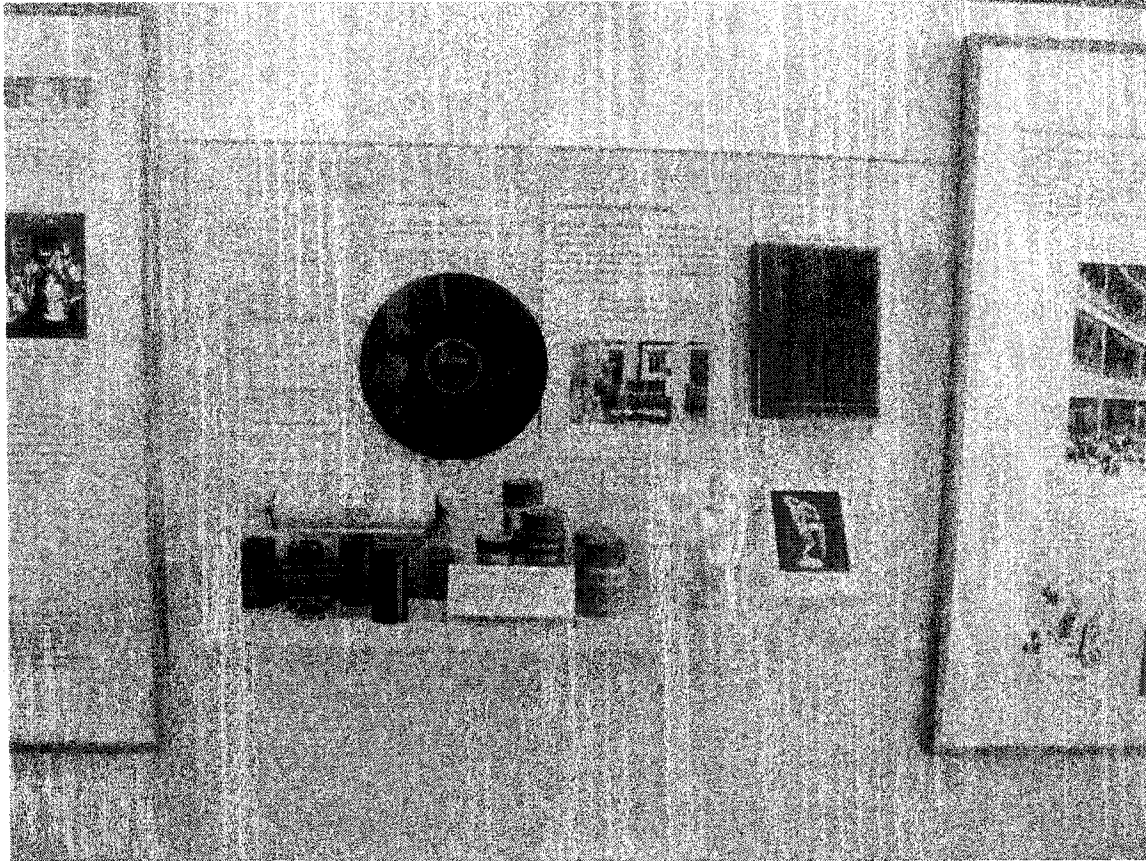
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-66. First-person interpretive program at Colonial Williamsburg, "Among the Dipping Gourds," 22 March 2003.



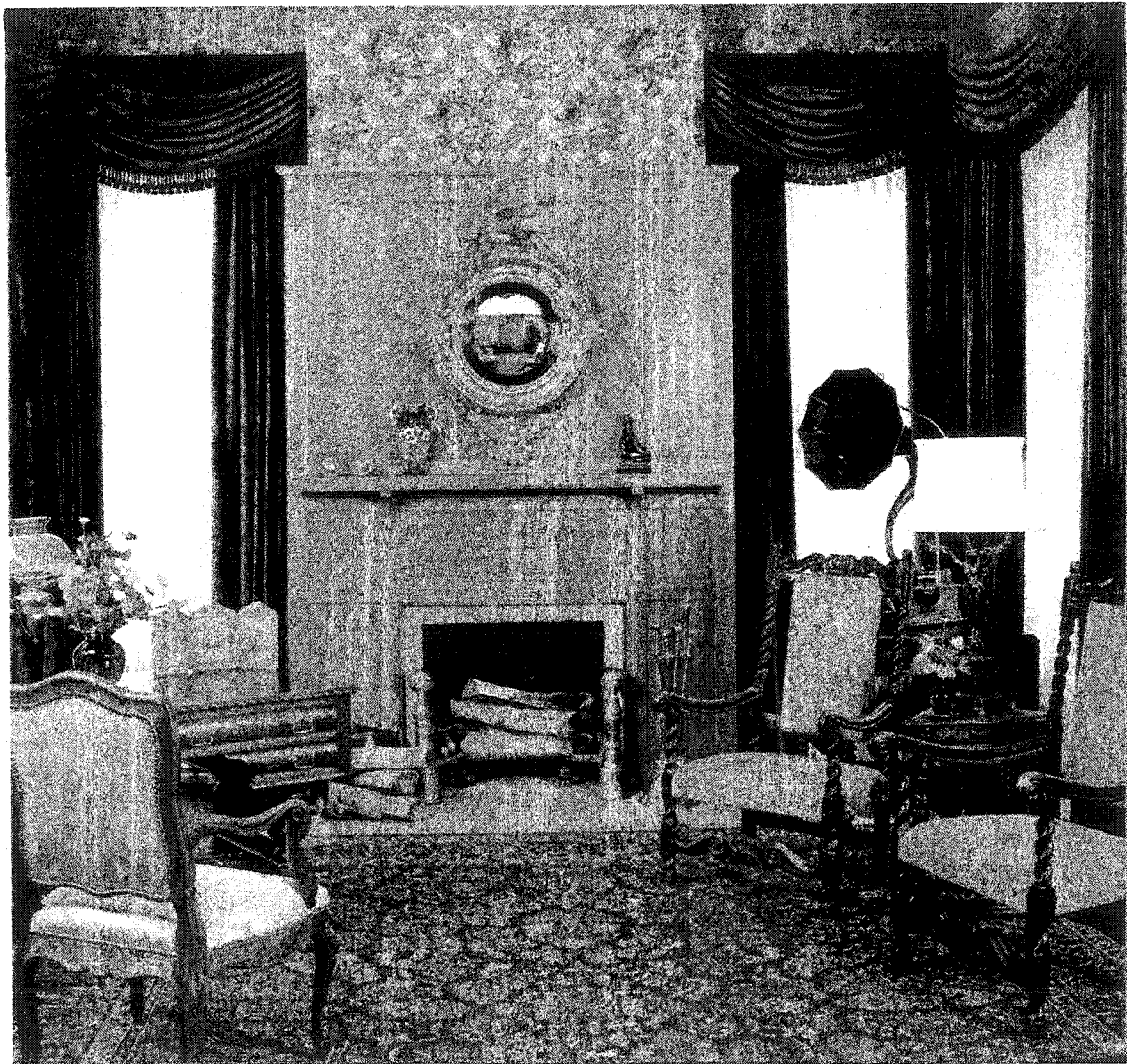
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-67. Display of arts-related artifacts in the Brucemore Visitor Center.



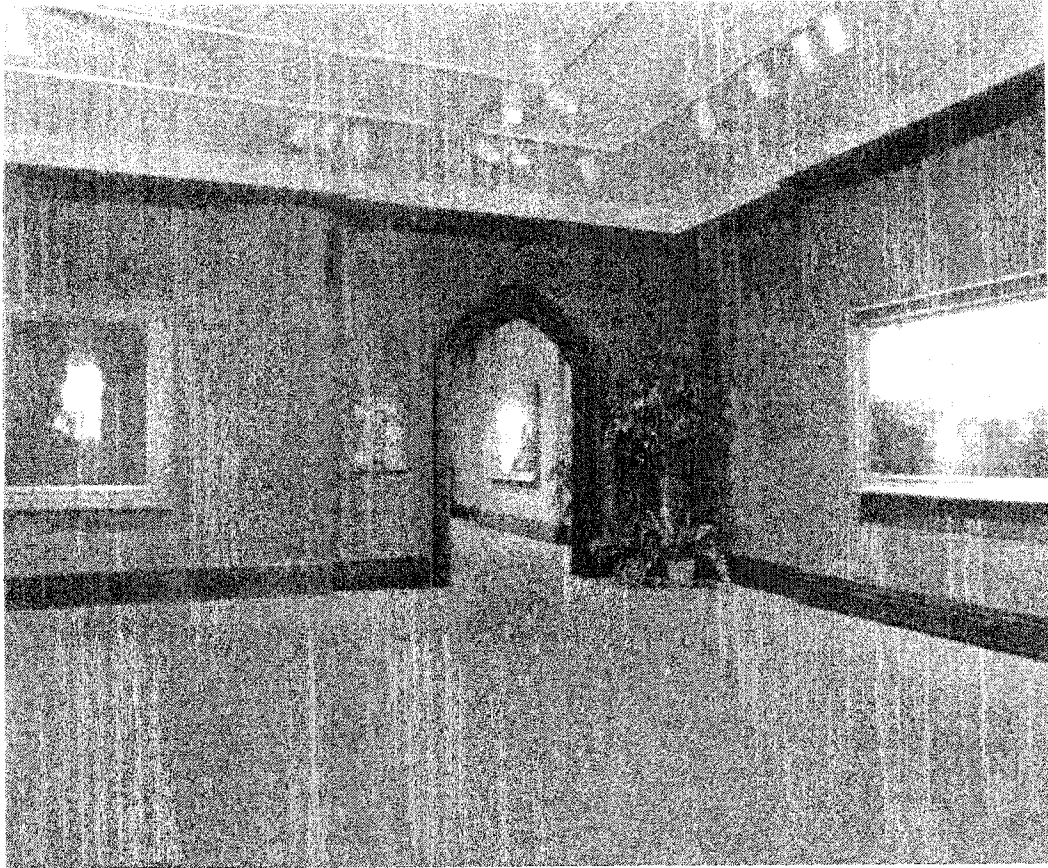
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-68. Study in Brucemore mansion, restored to c. 1915.



Source: Brucemore National Trust Historic Site, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Figure B-69. Frederick E. Church painting on display in an art museum retrospective.



Source: Karen Zukowski, "The Importance of Context," in *Conservation and Context: Finding a Balance for the Historic House Museum*, ed. Wendy Claire Jessup (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1995), 16.

Figure B-70. Church's painting hanging in the study of his home Olana.



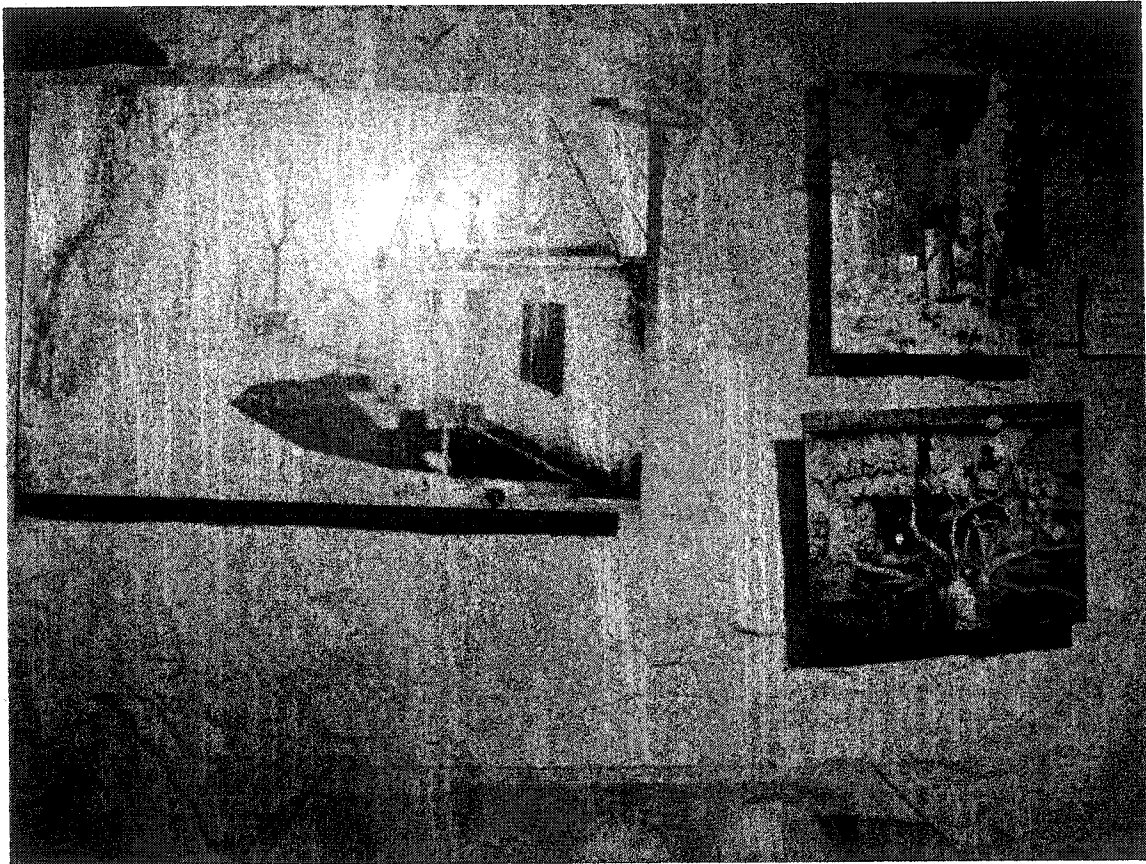
Source: Zukowski, 18.

Figure B-71. Quarters for enslaved people made over into public restrooms at the Hofwyl-Broadfield plantation in Georgia.



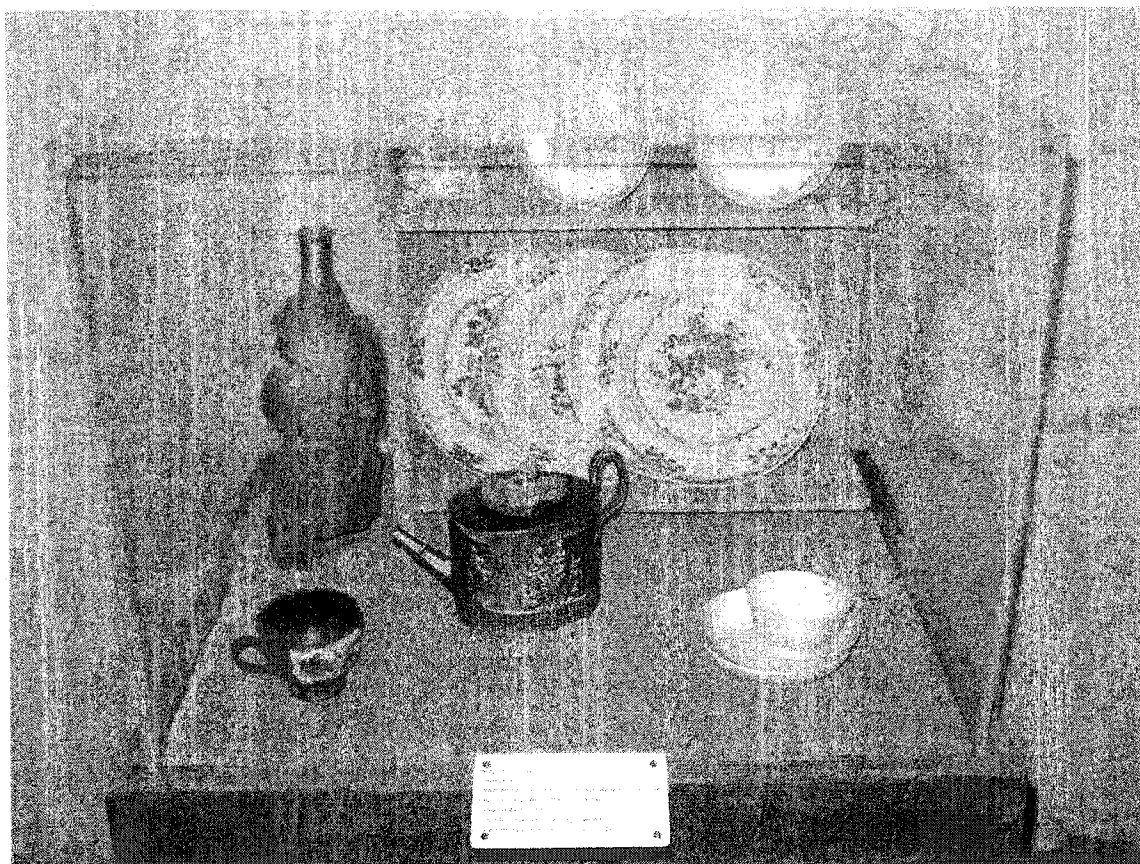
Source: Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 127.

Figure B-72. Photographs in an archaeology exhibition in Monticello's all-weather passageway.



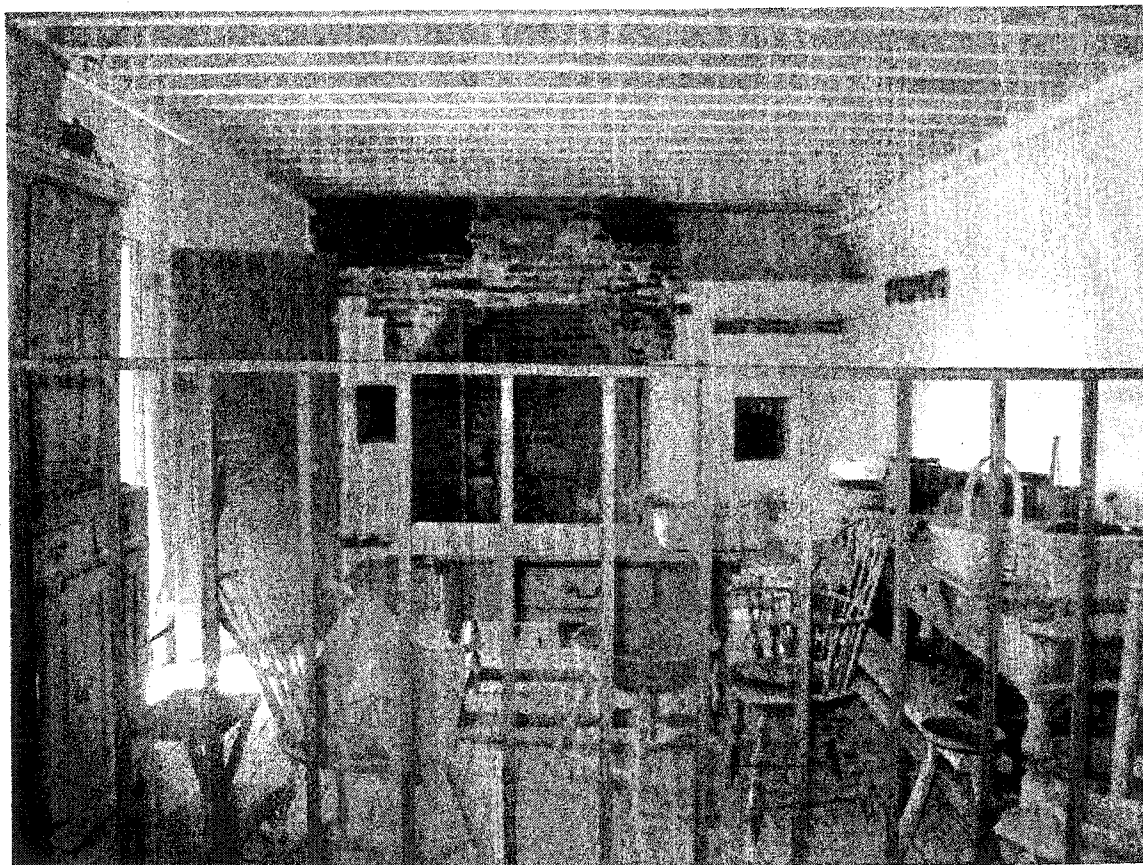
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-73. Artifacts in an archaeology exhibition in Monticello's all-weather passageway.



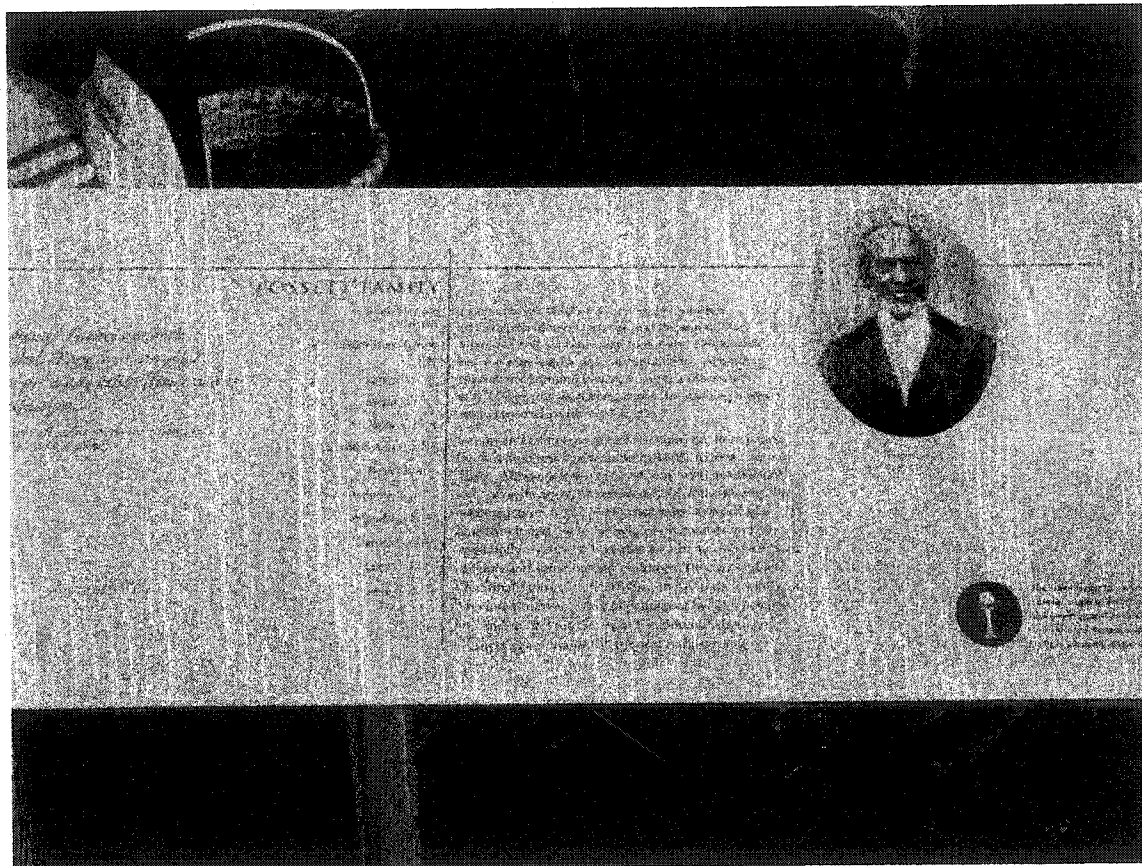
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-74. Kitchen at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello.



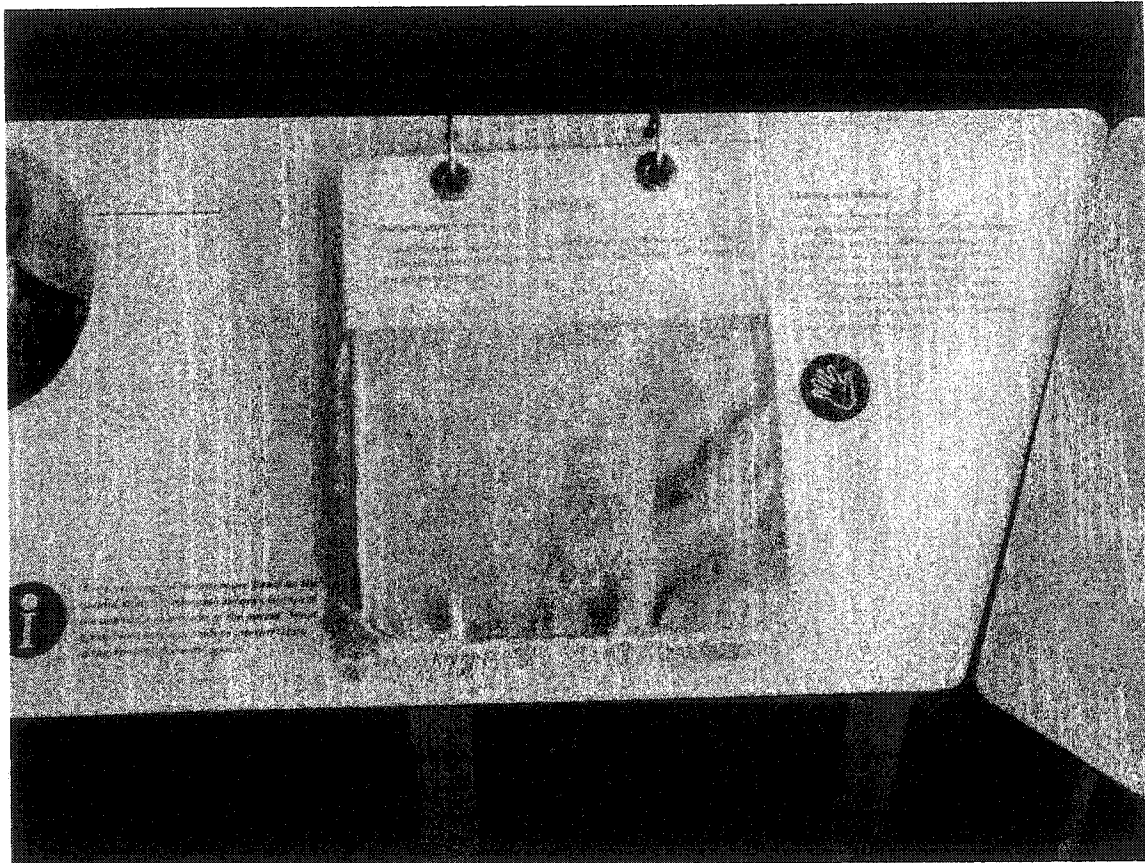
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-75. Reading rail panel in the room of Edith Fossett, Thomas Jefferson's cook at Monticello.



Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-76. Reading rail panel in the room of Edith Fossett, Thomas Jefferson's cook at Monticello.



Source: Photo by author.

Figure B-77. Mulberry Row, former location of Monticello's slave dwellings and workshops.



Source: Photo by author.

Figure B-78. Cover letter for house museum survey

Jennifer Pustz
 c/o Brucecore
 2160 Linden Drive SE
 Cedar Rapids, IA 52403

June 15, 2003

«Title»
 «Site_Name»
 «Street_Address»
 «City», «State» «Zip_code»

Dear «Title»,

I am a Ph.D. candidate in American Studies at the University of Iowa. My dissertation, "Help Wanted: Historic House Museums in the Era of Social History," examines how social history themes—including those related to domestic service—have been and might be more fully incorporated into historic house museum tours and programs. I hope that you will be willing to take a few moments to fill out the enclosed questionnaire about how your institution presents information about domestic servants and their interactions with employers. It takes fifteen to twenty minutes to complete, and the information you can provide will be essential to the thoroughness of my study. If attention to domestic servants is not part of your interpretation, it would be useful to know that as well.

I also work part-time as the historian at Brucecore, a National Trust site in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and have had considerable hands-on experience with developing new interpretation and dealing with the difficulties of conveying to visitors what is often partial or elusive information about domestic servants. My ambition in this dissertation is to produce a study that will contribute to the dialogue about how social history themes may be researched and effectively presented, especially in situations where personnel and financial resources are limited. My preliminary studies indicate there is growing interest in this topic among house museum professionals. Your feedback is very important to my project, and I will be most grateful to receive it.

To maintain confidentiality, I will not identify your site in the dissertation, but rather group your information with others from a state or region. If I choose to quote a particular response, your site will be also be identified by state or region. When I have tallied my data, in appreciation for your cooperation I will mail (or email, if you prefer) a summary of the results to you.

Please feel free to contact me by phone or email if you have questions about my dissertation or the questionnaire. My work number is (319) 362-7375, and my email address is jenniferp@brucecore.org. I am enclosing an addressed, stamped envelope for return of the completed survey.

I greatly appreciate your participation, and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Pustz
 Ph.D. Candidate in American Studies, University of Iowa
 Historian, Brucecore National Trust Historic Site

«Code number»

Figure B-79. Survey text

Survey of Historic Houses and Interpretation of Domestic Servants

For the purpose of this survey, the following terms are defined as follows:

- The *standard tour* is the daily tour given to the average walk-in visitor.
- *Domestic servants or servants* are any persons whose primary occupations are activities related to the care and comfort of their employers and their family, and cleaning and maintenance of their employer's home and its contents. This includes such persons as those engaged in personal service (butlers, lady's maids), housekeeping and cleaning, food preparation and serving, and childcare.

Your Site

Name of Institution: _____ Location: _____

Governance: _____ Year this site opened for public tours: _____

Staff size: Number full-time: _____ Part-time: _____

Seasonal staff: Number full-time: _____ Part-time: _____

Number of full-time volunteers: _____ Number of part-time volunteers: _____

Number of tour guides ____ paid staff ____ volunteers

What is your site's interpretive period?

What are your site's interpretive themes?

If your site interprets only periods before 1865, please stop now and return this survey. Thank you for your help!

Servants at your Site

1. Were servants present at your site during the interpretive period?
 Yes
 No **If no, please stop now and return this survey. Thank you for your help!**

2. How many servants worked at your site during its interpretive period? _____

3. Which categories of servants were present at your site?

<input type="checkbox"/> Butler	<input type="checkbox"/> Head Housekeeper	<input type="checkbox"/> Parlormaid
<input type="checkbox"/> Chambermaid	<input type="checkbox"/> Chef	<input type="checkbox"/> Cook
<input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen maid	<input type="checkbox"/> Scullery maid	<input type="checkbox"/> Children's nurse
<input type="checkbox"/> Governess	<input type="checkbox"/> Footman	<input type="checkbox"/> Chauffeur
<input type="checkbox"/> Head gardener	<input type="checkbox"/> Maid-of-all-work	<input type="checkbox"/> Lady's maid
<input type="checkbox"/> Other, please indicate _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		

4. Where did the domestic servant(s) live? (check all that apply)
 In the house Elsewhere on site Off site

5. The following is a list of the most common ethnic groups working in domestic service according to the 1900 census. Which ethnic groups are represented at your site?

Figure B-79 Continued

<input type="checkbox"/> Native-born white	<input type="checkbox"/> African-American	<input type="checkbox"/> Austrian
<input type="checkbox"/> Bohemian/Czech	<input type="checkbox"/> Canadian (English)	<input type="checkbox"/> Canadian(French)
<input type="checkbox"/> Danish	<input type="checkbox"/> English	<input type="checkbox"/> French
<input type="checkbox"/> German	<input type="checkbox"/> Hungarian	<input type="checkbox"/> Irish
<input type="checkbox"/> Italian	<input type="checkbox"/> Norwegian	<input type="checkbox"/> Polish
<input type="checkbox"/> Russian	<input type="checkbox"/> Scottish	<input type="checkbox"/> Swedish
<input type="checkbox"/> Swiss	<input type="checkbox"/> Native-born of foreign parentage	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other ethnicities; please indicate _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> We do not know the ethnic backgrounds of any of the servants who worked at our site.		

6. Is information about the domestic servant(s) part of your site's standard tour?
 Yes
 No **If no, please continue with question 34.**

Interpretation of servants at your site

7. Which interpretive method(s) are used for your site's standard tour? (mark all that apply)
 Third-person interpretation
 First-person interpretation
 Self-guided – labels or exhibit-style panels in the rooms
 Self-guided – written brochure
 Acoustiguide or similar recorded tour with headphones
 Stationary guides posted throughout the house
 Other (please describe): _____

7a) Which of the above methods are used to interpret domestic servants?

8. Are service areas (kitchen, servants' hall, servants' bedrooms) part of the standard tour?
 Yes Please identify _____
 No

8a. Are any of the above rooms restored as "period rooms"?
 Yes Please identify _____
 No

9. May visitors tour support buildings used by servants (i.e. stables, greenhouses, etc.)?
 Yes
 No
 Not applicable

10. Does your site have artifact collections relevant to servants who worked there?
 Yes; Please describe: _____
 No

11. Does your site have archival collections relevant to servants who worked there?
 Yes; Please describe: _____
 No

12. Has your staff conducted off-site research about the site's servants?
 Yes; Please describe: _____
 No

13. Does your site include information about domestic service in its tours that is not site-specific?
 Yes

Figure B-79 Continued

13a) If yes, which of the following have been the most significant sources?

Histories of domestic service Regional history collections
 Period etiquette/household manuals Period newspapers
 Period magazines

13b) Which statement best describes your site's use of general sources?
 They are our primary resources for interpreting servants.
 We use them to supplement what we know about actual servants at the site.
 We use them sparingly.

No

Comments:

Please indicate the significance of the following topics in the standard tour.

	5	4	3	2	1
	5 = Very significant				1 = Not significant
14. Difficulty of servants' work	5	4	3	2	1
15. Use of domestic appliances and technology	5	4	3	2	1
16. Ethnic backgrounds of servants	5	4	3	2	1
17. Working conditions of servants	5	4	3	2	1
18. Living conditions of servants	5	4	3	2	1
19. Social stigma of domestic service	5	4	3	2	1
20. Friendship between servants and employers	5	4	3	2	1
21. Conflict between servants and employers	5	4	3	2	1
22. Ethnic or racial prejudices of the era	5	4	3	2	1
23. Gender of domestic servants	5	4	3	2	1
24. The "servant problem"	5	4	3	2	1
25. Benefits of domestic service	5	4	3	2	1
26. Servants' uniforms	5	4	3	2	1

Comments:

27. How would you describe the site's tour guides' reactions to interpreting domestic service?
 Enthusiastic Favorable Indifferent
 Resistant Other; Please describe

Comments:

28. How would you describe the visitors' reactions to hearing about domestic service?
 Enthusiastic Favorable Indifferent
 Resistant Other; Please describe

Comments:

Special Programs

29. Does your site currently offer special programs for the general public that focus on domestic service?
 Yes
 No If no, please continue with question 33.

30. These programs are offered seasonally year-round.
Comments:

31. How frequent are these programs during the season or year?

Figure B-79 Continued

Daily Weekly Monthly
 Once each season/year Occasionally, not on any specific schedule

32. Please provide a brief description of domestic service related programs:

33. Does your site offer school programs that focus on the domestic servants?
 Yes
 No

33a) If yes, please provide a brief description:

Please note any final comments in the section below.

Sites Not Interpreting Domestic Service

34. Which of the following circumstances prevent interpretation of domestic service at your site? (check all that apply)

The subject does not fit within our mission or interpretive objectives.
 Financial resources are limited or unavailable.
 Personnel resources are limited or unavailable.
 This site lacks the necessary artifacts and archives to address the issue as we would like.
 Board, staff, and/or volunteers are resistant to the idea.
 This issue would be too sensitive to address in this community or region.
 Other; Please describe:

34a) Which of the above is the primary reason for not interpreting servants?

35. Are there plans to develop interpretation of domestic service in the future?
 Yes
 No

Additional Comments

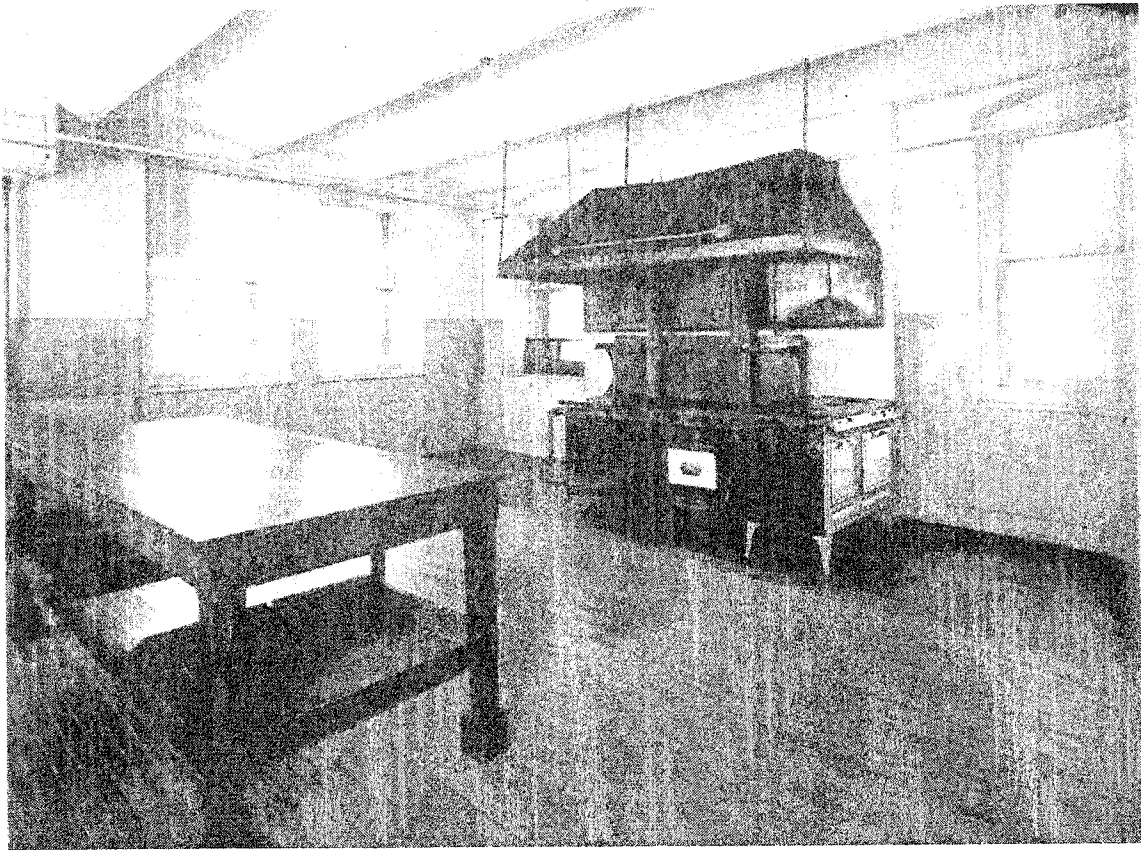
36. Please add any additional comments you have about the interpretation of domestic servants at your historic house museum:

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your responses and comments will be of great assistance to my project. I look forward to sharing the results with you in the near future.

If you would prefer to receive the summary of results by e-mail, please note the address here:

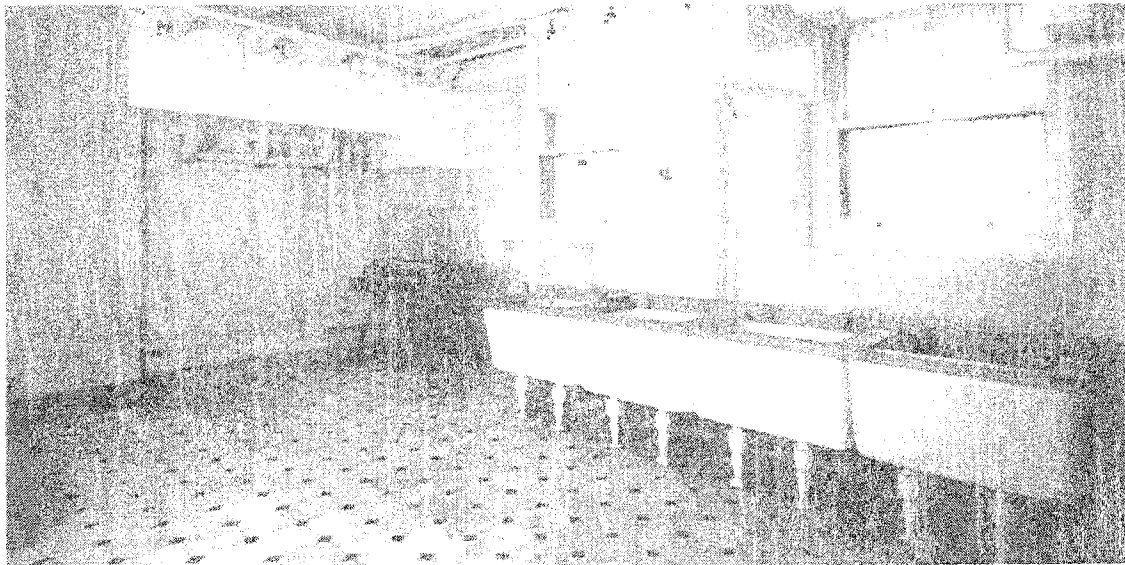
Contact Information:
 Jennifer Pustz, c/o BruceMore
 2160 Linden Drive SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52403
 319-362-7375 jenniferp@brucemore.org

Figure B-80. Kitchen at the James J. Hill House, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 1987.



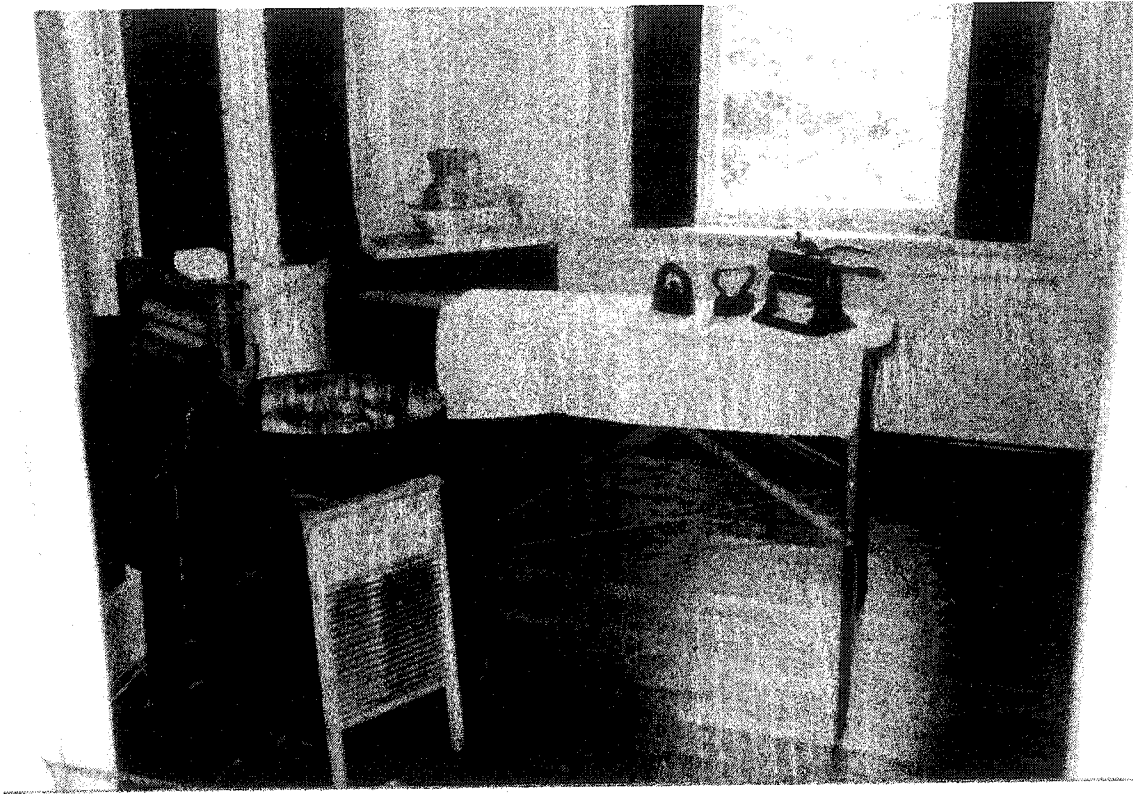
Source: Craig Johnson, *James J. Hill House* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1993), 26.

Figure B-81. Laundry room at the James J. Hill House, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1987.



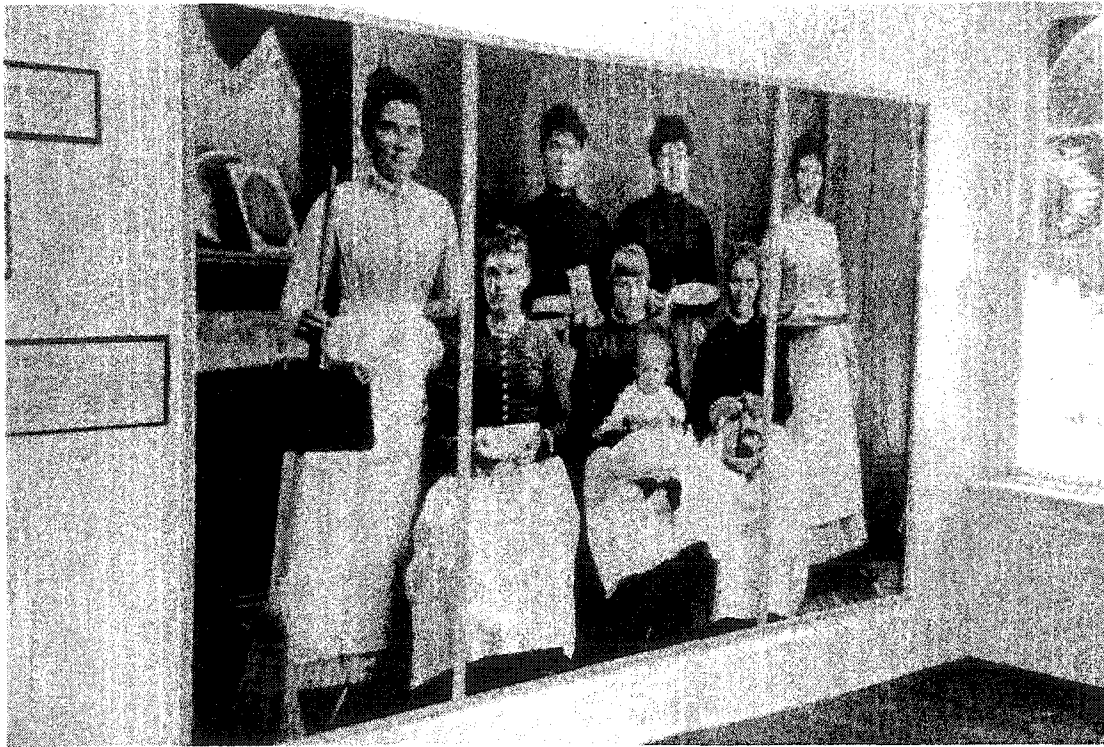
Source: Johnson, 27.

Figure B-82. Preserve House display of equipment from the Laundry Building, Villa Louis, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.



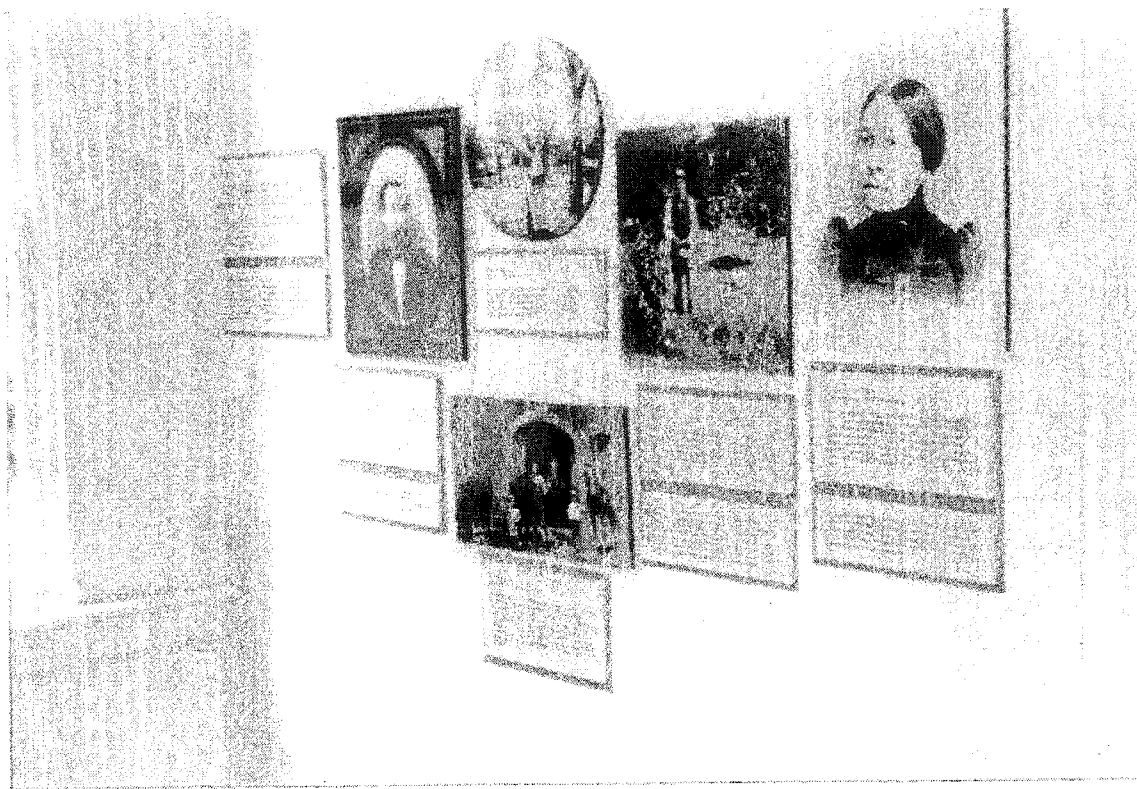
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-83. Display of Charles van Shaick's photograph of Norwegian domestics from Black River Falls, Wisconsin in the exhibition, "Laundress, Nursemaid, Coachman, Cook: Keeping House at Villa Louis," Villa Louis, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.



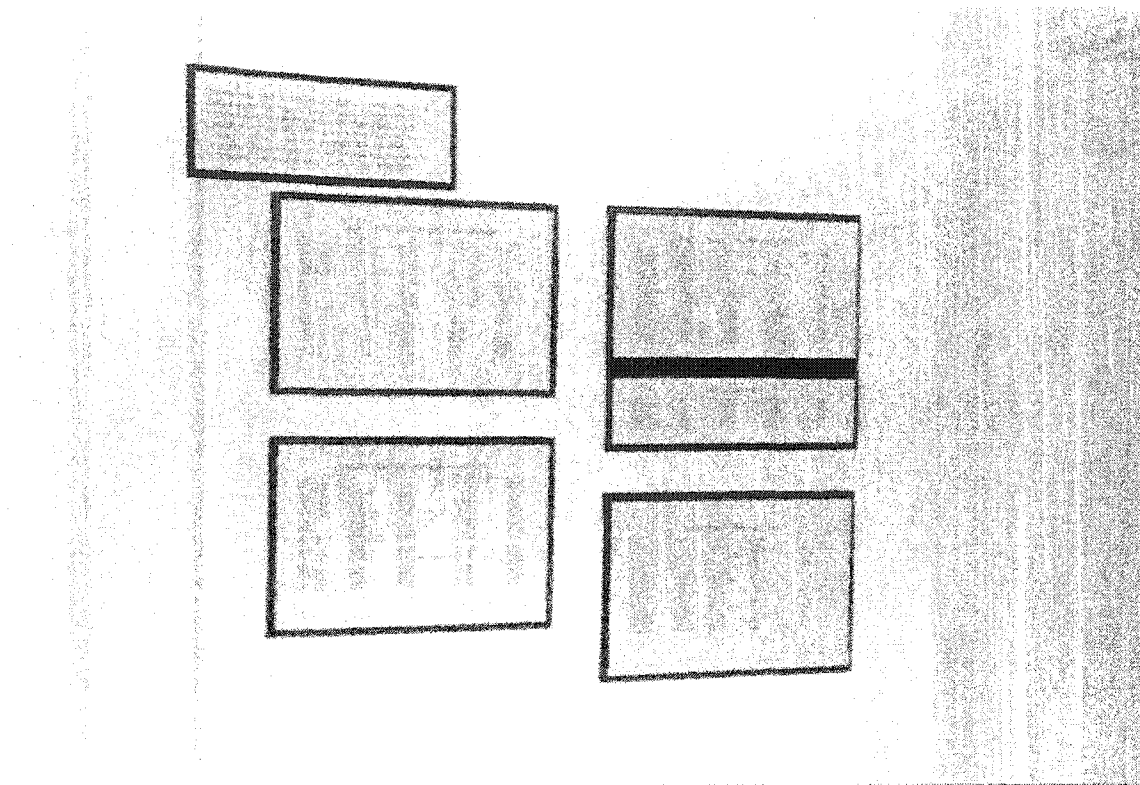
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-84. Display of servants' photos in the exhibition "Laundress, Nursemaid, Coachman, Cook: Keeping House at Villa Louis," Villa Louis, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.



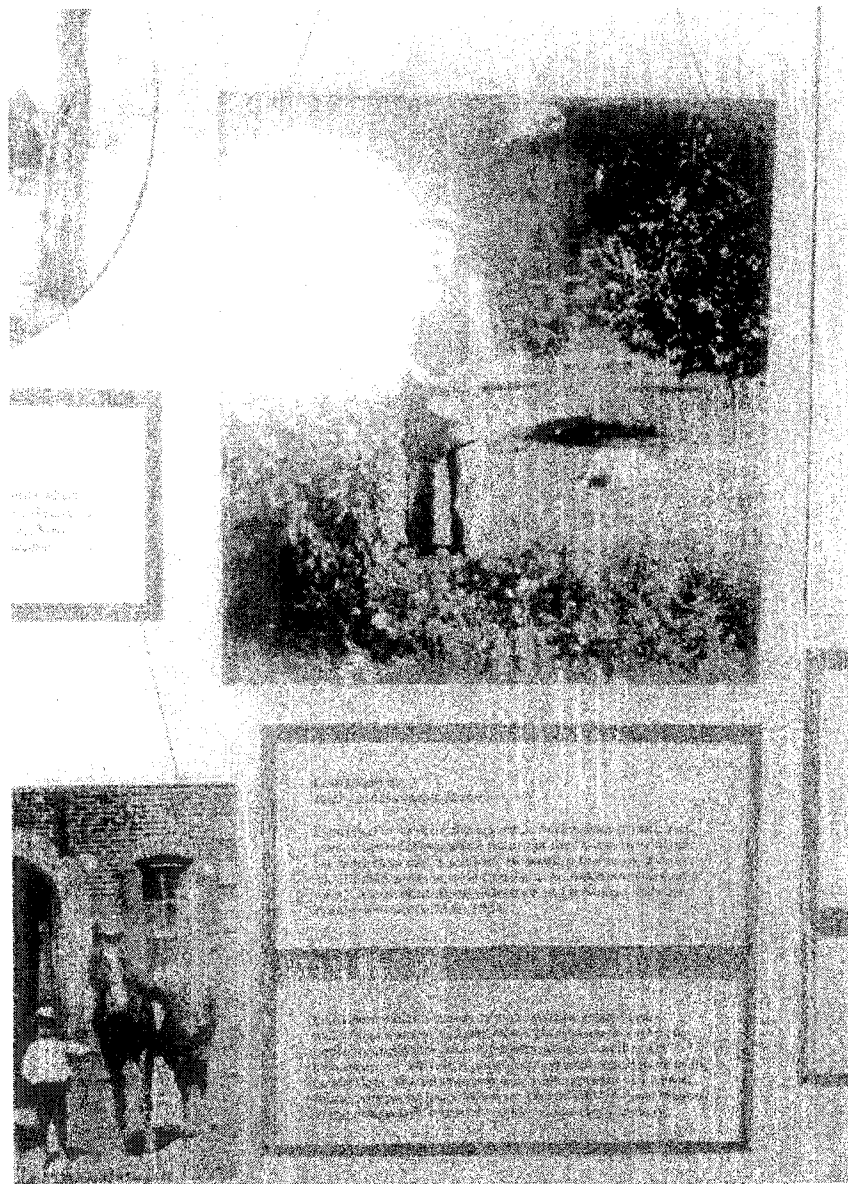
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-85. Lists of servants in the exhibition "Laundress, Nursemaid, Coachman, Cook: Keeping House at Villa Louis," Villa Louis, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.



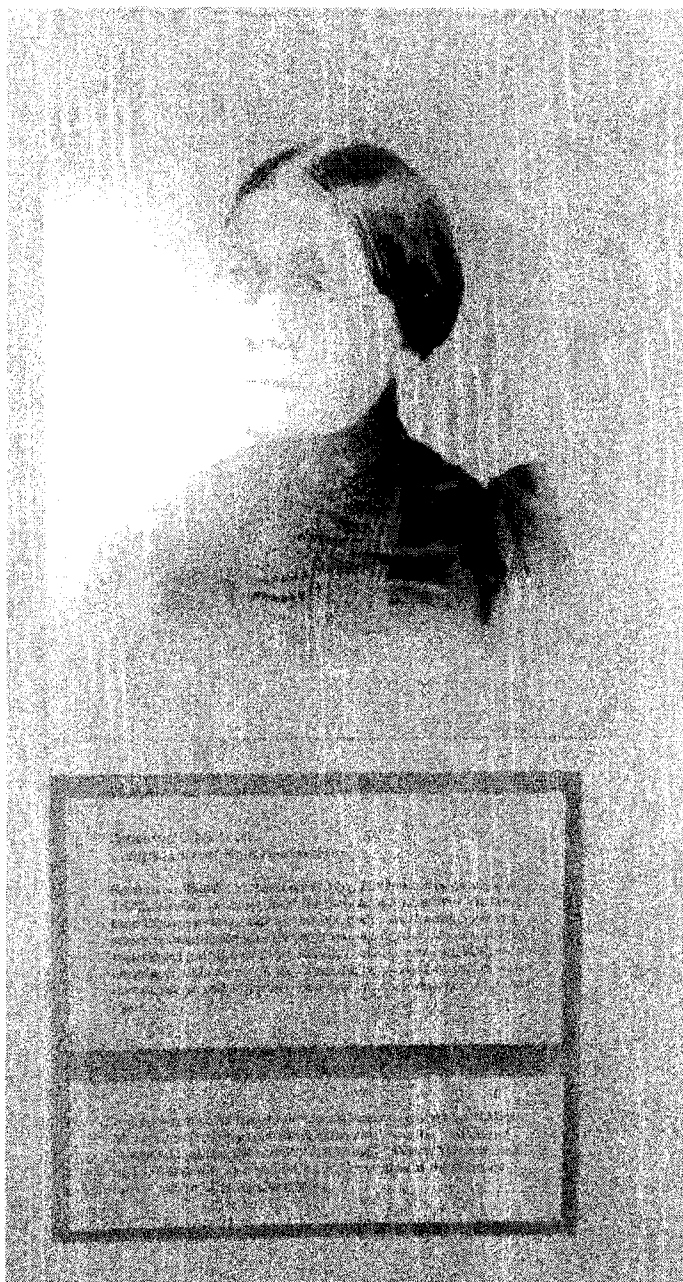
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-86. Photograph of Louis LeBrun in the exhibition "Laundress, Nursemaid, Coachman, Cook: Keeping House at Villa Louis," Villa Louis, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.



Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-87. Photograph of Penelope McLeod in the exhibition "Laundress, Nursemaid, Coachman, Cook: Keeping House at Villa Louis," Villa Louis, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.



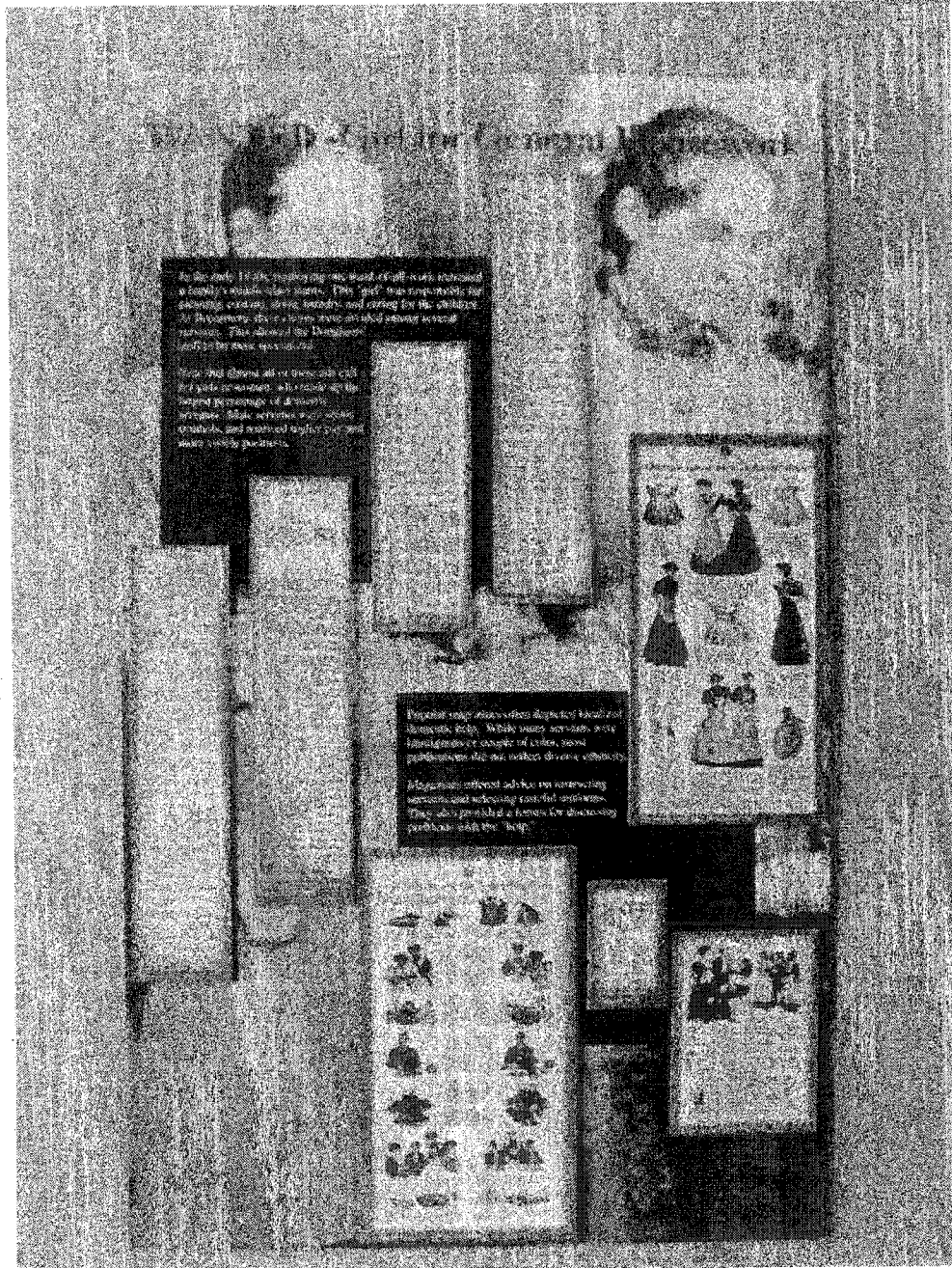
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-88. Guide in costume for Servants' Tours at Villa Louis, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, June 2000.



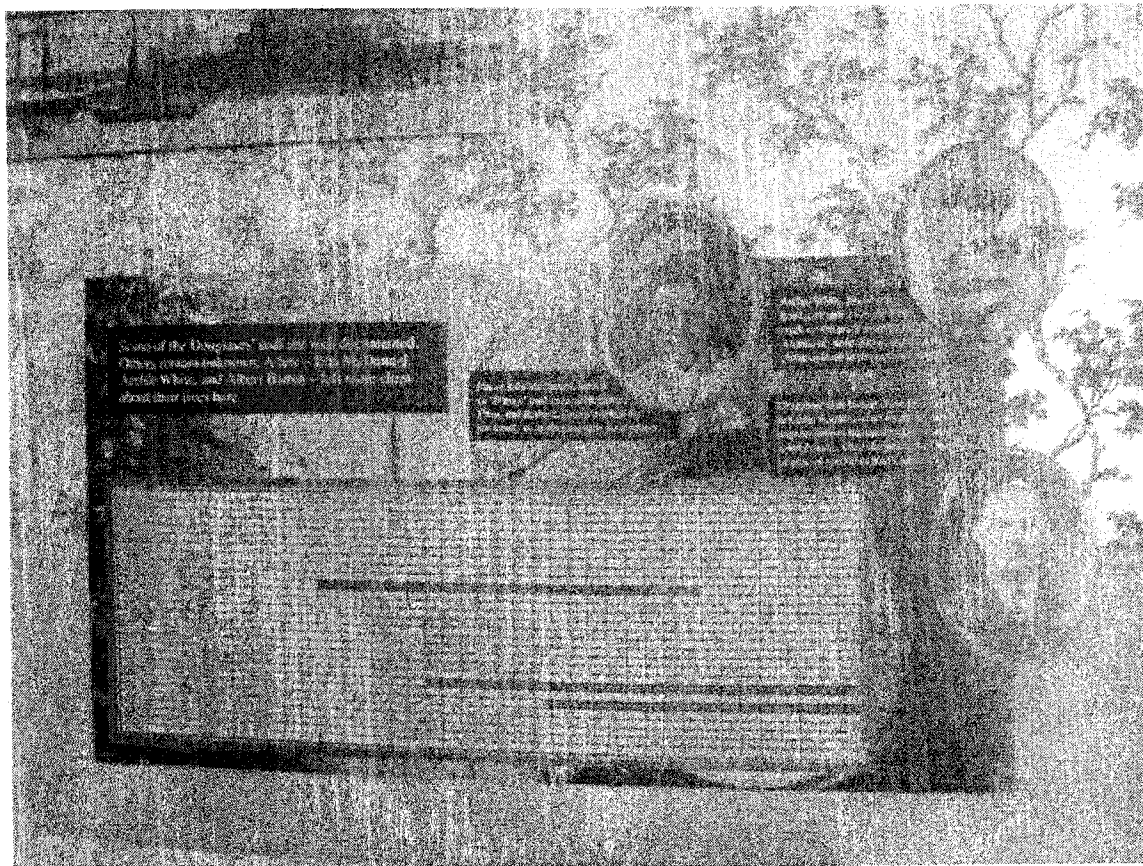
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-89. "Help Wanted" panel on display in the servants' dining room at Brucemore Historic Site, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-90. "Help Wanted" panel on display in the sewing room at Brucemore Historic Site, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



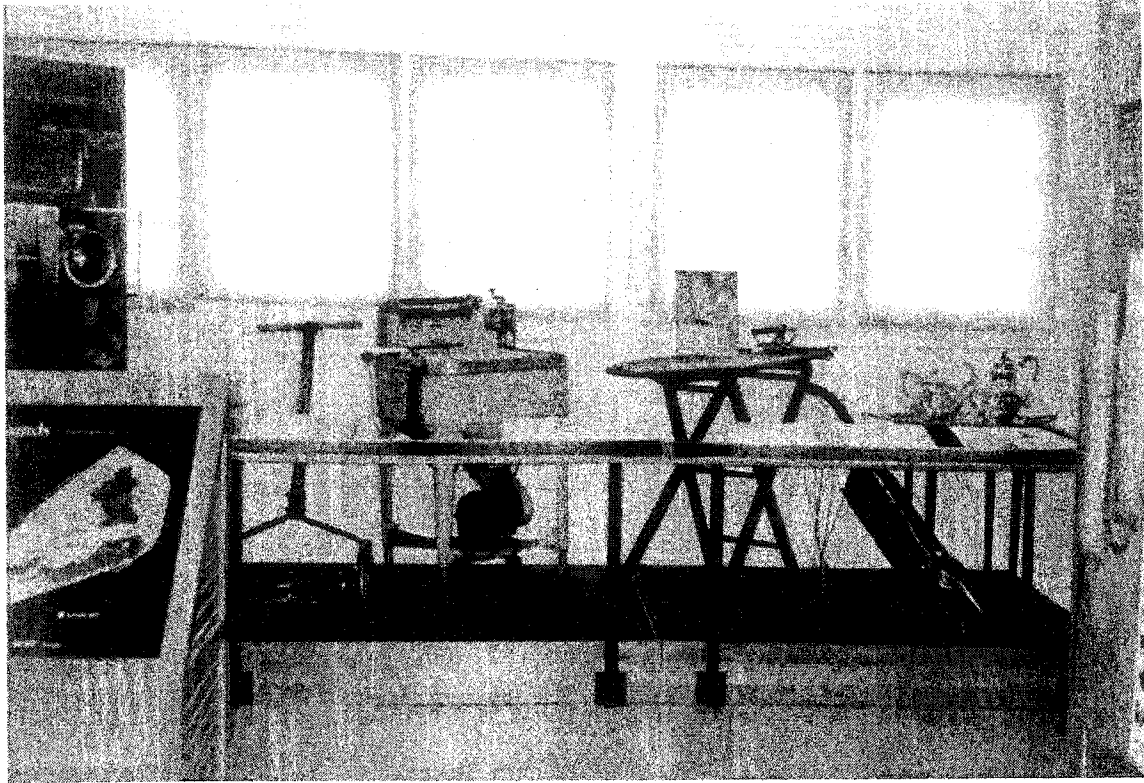
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-91. "Help Wanted" panel and "Danny" cutout on display in Ella McDannel's bedroom at the Brucemore Historic Site, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-92. Display of early twentieth century household tools in the Bruce more exhibition "Help Wanted: Working at Bruce more, 1907-1937," Fall 1999.



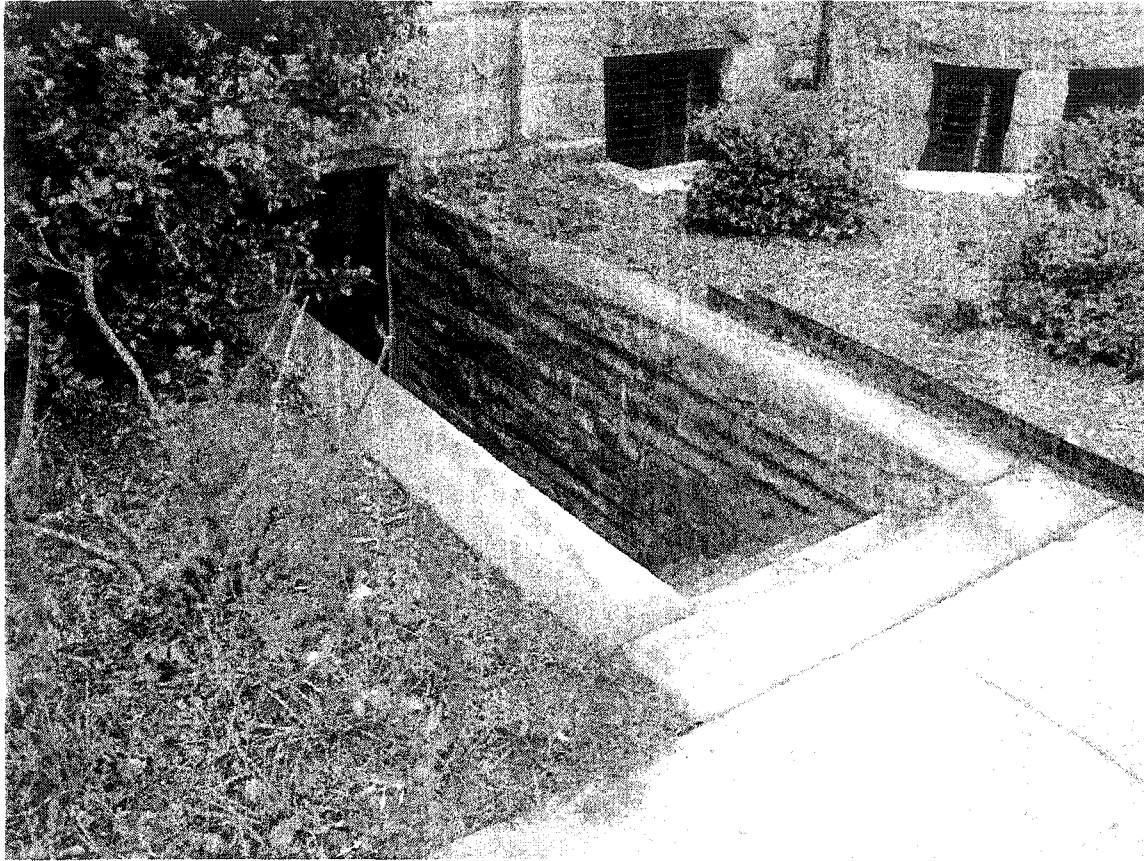
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-93. Maymont House, Richmond, Virginia., 17 March 2003.



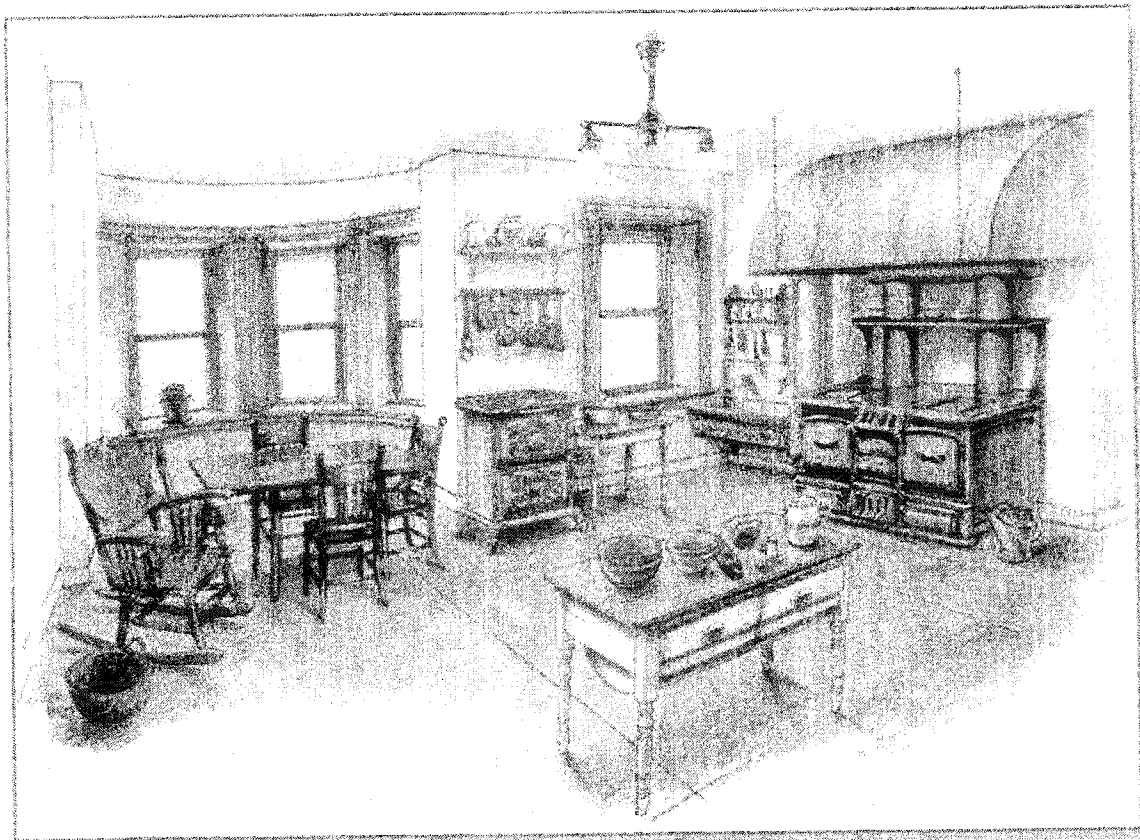
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-94. Servants' entrance at Maymont, Richmond, Virginia, 17 March 2003.



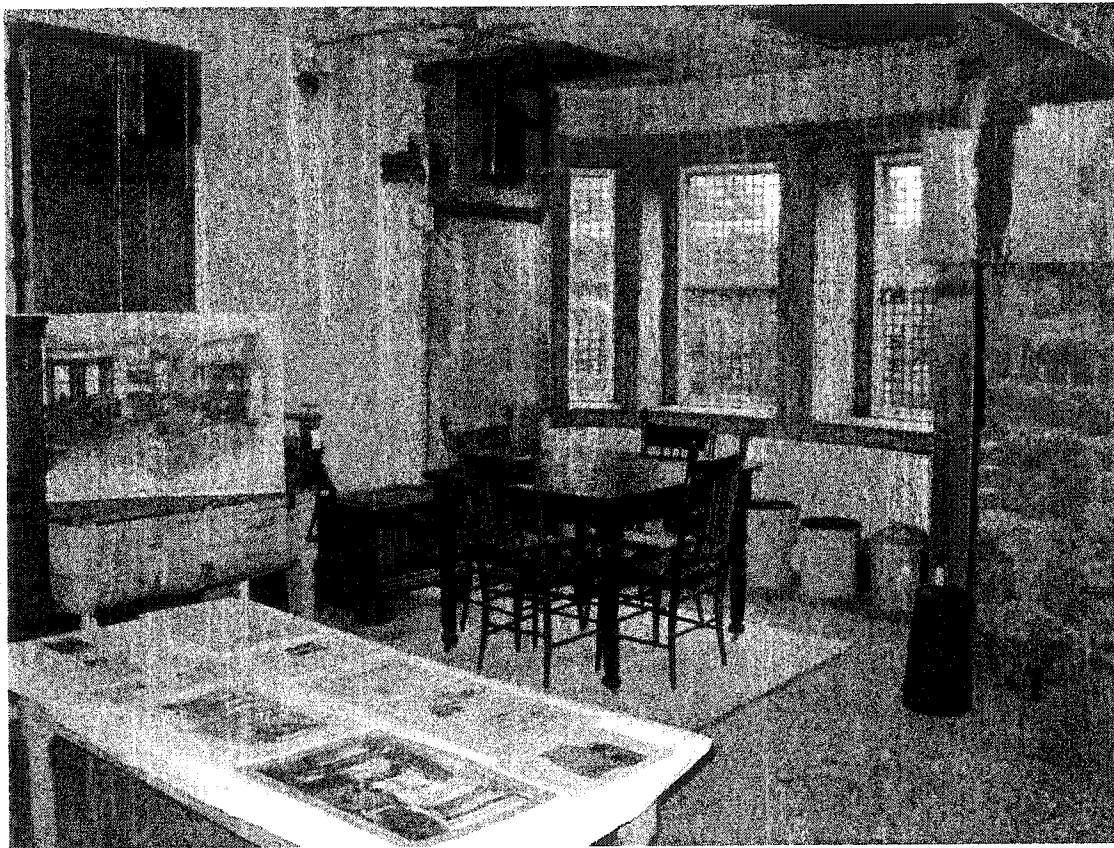
Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-95. Artist's rendering of the proposed kitchen restoration at Maymont House, Richmond, Virginia.



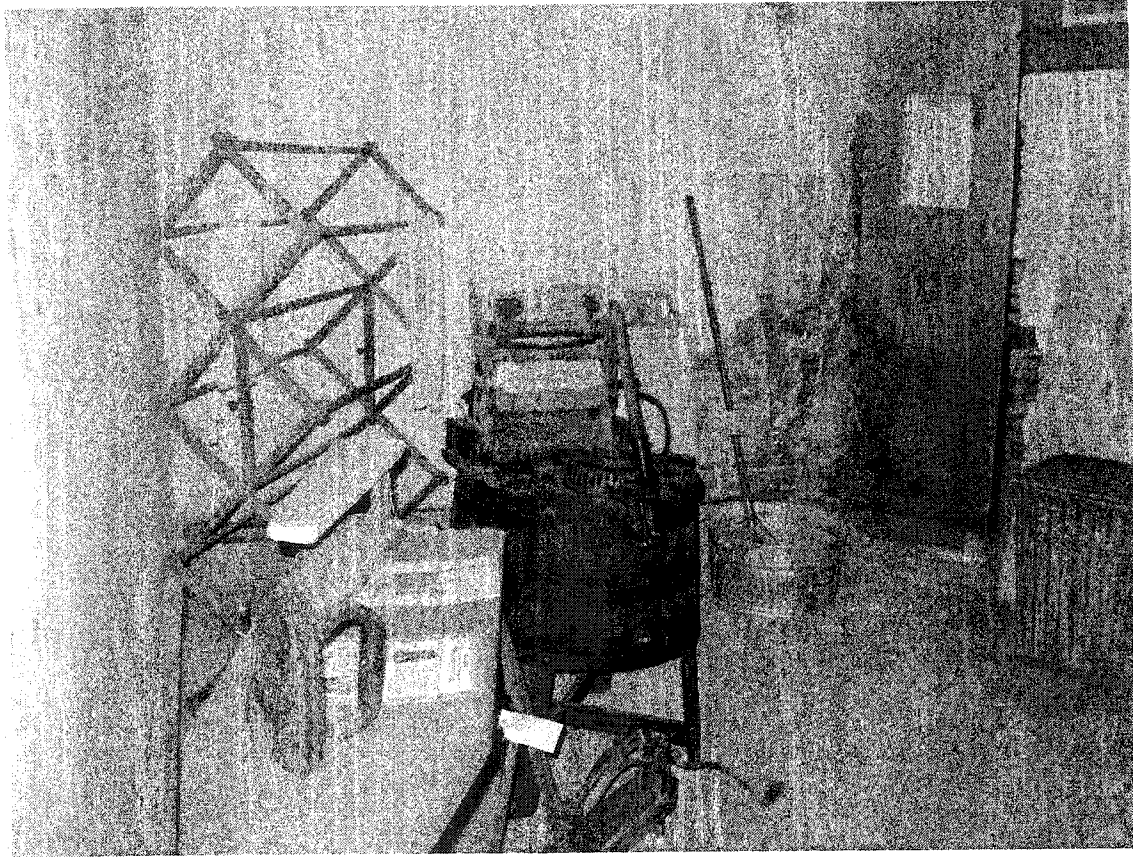
Source: *Maymont Notes* (Fall 2002), back cover.

Figure B-96. Unrestored kitchen at Maymont House, 17 March 2003.



Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-97. Unrestored laundry room at Maymont House, 17 March 2003.



Source: Photo by the author.

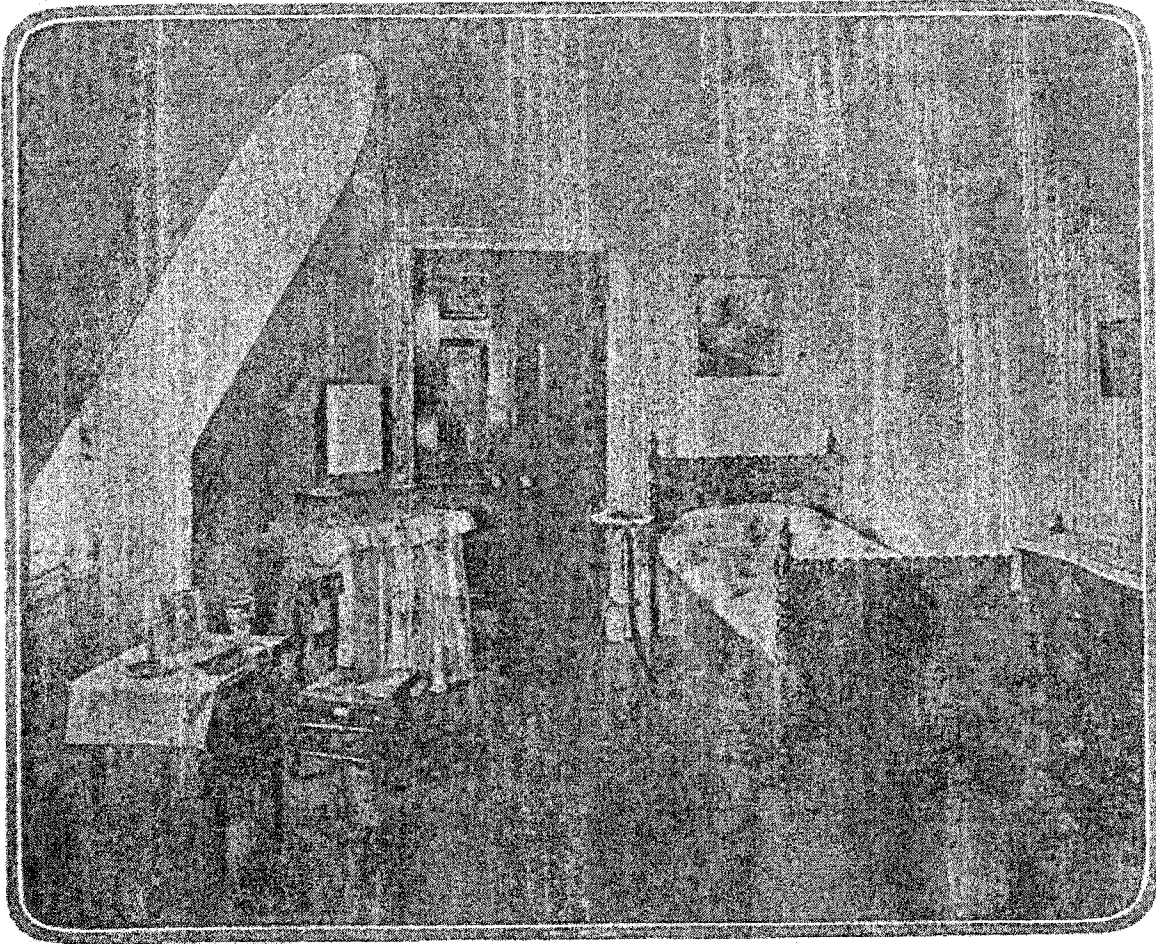
Figure B-98. Butler's screen in the Bruce more dining room.



Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-99. Photograph of a servant's bedroom.

A room admirably suited to the purpose for which it was arranged. The window is draped with simple muslin curtains with wide draperies of the creionne.



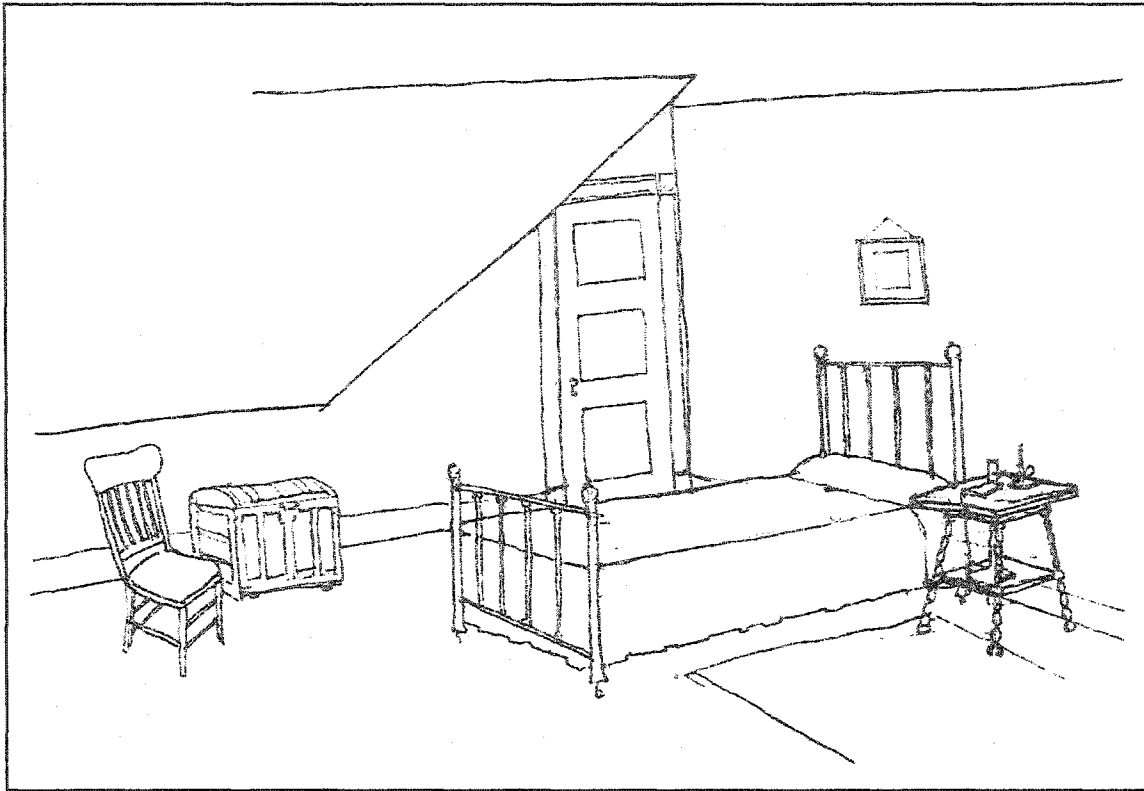
Source: Hanna Tachau, "Furnishing the Servants' Rooms," *House Beautiful*, October 1920, 288.

Figure B-100. Servants' bedroom at Brucemore.



Source: Photo by the author.

Figure B-101. Artist's rendering of maid's room at Sagamore Hill National Historic Site, New York.



Source: David Wallace, *Sagamore Hill Historic Furnishings Report*, Vol. 2. (Washington D. C., 1991), Figure 92.

Figure B-102. Alfred Batten, Edward White, Ivy Batten, and Agnes White, c. 1930. Alfred and Ivy Batten were butler and maid at Brucemore; the Whites were children of Brucemore's head gardener, Archie White.



Source: Brucemore Historic Site Archives, courtesy of Agnes White Hembera, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Figure B-103. Promotional piece from Merry Maids.

*There's a Reason
We Call Ourselves
Merry Maids.*

*Merry Maids teams
are thoroughly-trained
specialists who clean
your home like no one
else. We love keeping
your home - and your
reputation - spotless.*

*Check out the money-saving
offer on the other side.*

Source: Collection of the author.

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